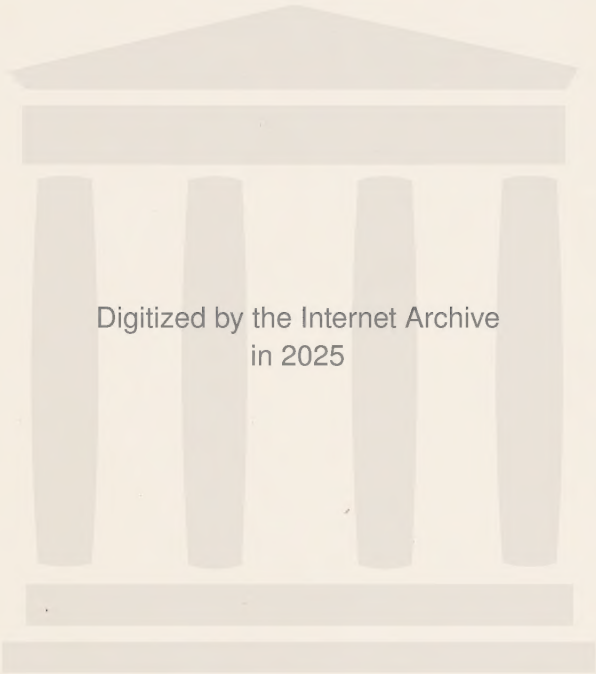
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SHANDON BELLS

SHANDON BELLS

A Novel

BY

WILLIAM BLACK

AUTHOR OF 'MACLEOD OF DARE,' 'SUNRISE,' ETC.

"With deep affection
And recollection
I often think of
Those Shandon bells,
Whose sounds so wild would
In the days of childhood
Fling round my cradle
Their magic spells."
FATHER PROUT.

IN THREE VOLUMES

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SHANDON BELLS.

CHAPTER I.

A GO-BETWEEN.

Two days after the public announcement had been made that there was to be no more of the *Household Magazine*, Fitzgerald was sitting in that solitary room of his, alone. The morning was crisp and clear; there was a wintry feeling in the air; the sunlight falling into the little courtyard was cheerful enough, even if the small plane-trees had lost their leaves. But it was not of the Fulham Road he was thinking, now that he had put away from him the sheet of paper on the table. This first touch of the winter had awakened dreams. Now the picture before his absent eyes was Kenvane Head; the blue sea all murmuring; the vast caves

silent and mysterious ; his only companion a sagacious, quick-eyed spaniel, lying with his nose between his paws, and yet evidently not understanding why his master should thus be content to sit and muse, instead of being up and after the wild-fowl. Again it was a wild moorland on a bitter cold night ; Andy the Hopper and he each cramped up in a barrel sunk into the bog ; both breathlessly waiting for the sudden whirr overhead of the duck. Or rather was it not of that wonderful day when Miss Romayne first condescended to go out into the open light of the streets with him ; his consciousness that all Cork was looking at and admiring her ; the delight of recommending a particular seat on board the steamer ; the sail past the golden autumn woods, and the broad shallows of the river, out into the great, shining, windy Harbour, with its glancing waves, and white yachts, and islands ; her admiration of a pretty bareheaded lass at Aghadoe, whose hair seemed to have been bleached by the sea-air and the sunlight into different shades of golden-

brown, and Kitty's timid remark that she thought his hair was like that (followed by a quick blush, for their acquaintanceship at that time did not quite justify personal criticism); and then, finally, his faithful escort of her home in the evening, Miss Patience most happily being confined to her house with neuralgia? Or was it of that other day when, at a later period of their intimacy, he had inveigled her away into a boat with him; the Atlantic calm and blue; Kitty getting her first lessons in rowing, and pulling away so bravely that by-and-by it was discovered that her poor little white hands had become quite rosy-red inside; then fishing off the deep shelving rocks; her shriek of delight when she felt a tug; her shriek of fear when he hauled in for her a gasping and flopping gurnard; their luncheon on the beach, and the wonder of having Kitty wait on him and offer him things; then the long row home, Kitty lying snugly in the stern, and chatting or laughing or singing as the mood overtook her, the while the westering sun sank slowly towards the horizon, and

the heavens became a blaze of green, and gold, and crimson fire, and the clear star of the lighthouse, high up there on the cliff, shone out to sea? On this wintry morning his thoughts and dreams were far away indeed from the Fulham Road.

There was a step on the stair outside.

"John Ross come back from Cookham," he thought.

But when, in answer to a sharp knock, he went and opened the door, it was not the Scotch artist but Mr. Scobell he found before him—Mr. Scobell looking very smart indeed with his glazed boots, his dog-skin gloves, and cane.

"How are you, Fitzgerald?" said he, and as he entered the big, bare room he looked curiously around, for this was his first visit. "Hope you're not busy. Glad to find you at home. So this is your bunk, is it? Hum, you're not so well housed as Hilton Clarke was in the Albany. Perhaps that is because you live on your own money and not on some one else's."

"I don't think there's any use in going back on that," said Fitzgerald, uneasily.

"Oh, you take it very quietly — very quietly. Quite right to stick up for your friend, though; if you look at it in that way. That's not quite how I see it."

He sat down; stretched out his legs; and tapped the tip of his boot with his cane.

"The fact is," said he, calmly, "I have been trying these last two or three days to find out how I came to be such a fool as to go into anything that Hilton Clarke proposed. But he is a devilish plausible fellow; devilish plausible. There's a sort of infernal superior air about him that imposes on people; you can't imagine he'd swindle you——"

"I don't think we need talk about it; for we shan't agree about it," said Fitzgerald, bluntly.

"Well, he has made me dance to a pretty tune. Do you know how much he has got out of me altogether?"

"You appear to forget," said Fitzgerald, somewhat angrily, "that you went into that scheme entirely as a business matter. It looked promising enough. You had your eyes open. I suppose if it had been suc-

cessful; if it had made money, and been socially a success, there would not have been any talking about swindling——"

"Very well, very well," said Mr. Scobell, good-naturedly, "we will not talk about it. I consider you have more right to complain than I have. But I did not come here to talk about Clarke. I came here to talk about you."

He glanced round the apartment; then at the small table, with its bottle of ink and big sheets of paper.

"I suppose now," said he, with an abstracted, dreamy air, as if he was talking of something a long way off, "I suppose now it isn't very easy to get on in literature in London?"

"I find it difficult enough; in fact I can't get on at all," said Fitzgerald; and then he added, with a kind of rueful smile: "However, I have not quite despaired yet. I am trying to find out whether it is my work that is bad; or whether it is that the newspapers and magazines are over-manned; or there is this possibility—that my work may not be so very bad, and yet just miss something that

makes it practicable and suitable. Well, I hope to find out in time—and the sooner the better for me."

"Yes, no doubt," observed Mr. Scobell, again assuming that contemplative air. "You have applied to the *Times*, I suppose?"

"No; I imagine every one applies to the *Times*," Fitzgerald said. "And then there is a great drawback; I don't know shorthand——"

"You can learn——"

"I ought to have learnt it long ago. It takes a terrible time, and constant practice, they say, before you are worth anything to a newspaper. I ought to have learnt it while I had a fixed situation in Cork. That was my chance. Well, I lost my chance, partly, I suppose, because I had ambitions beyond newspaper-work, and partly because I could get too easily down to my native place, where there was always a gun or a rod. Now I am paying the penalty; for the newspapers don't seem to want my fine literature, and I can't offer them good reporting."

"My dear f'lah," said Mr. Scobell, re-

garding him with an air of the most magnificent patronage, "I am delighted to hear you talk so sensibly—delighted! Sooner or later the public will listen to you. They will discover that you can recognise facts. But in the meantime," added this artful diplomatist, with somewhat greater caution, "in the meantime, you see, you must make the best of it——"

"No doubt——"

"But wait a moment. When I see you in such a reasonable and sensible way of thinking, I don't think I can do better than put before you a proposal—a suggestion—that was made to me yesterday by Mrs. Chetwynd. Now she is also a person of common sense. She is practical, and she is also sympathetic. When she saw the announcement that our magazine had stopped, it occurred to her that you might have a little more time on your hands; and she sent for me at once."

"Yes?" said Fitzgerald; though he did not quite see what literary employment he could obtain from Mrs. Chetwynd.

"To make a long story short—for we had a considerable talk about you—the sum and substance of her suggestion is this: that, if you had time to spare from your general literary work, it might be worth your while to accept some additional occupation which, with no great trouble, might—ah—might, in fact, increase your income."

"I would gladly," said Fitzgerald, without hesitation. "But it sounds rather—rather vague, doesn't it?"

"Oh no. She had a distinct proposal. If you will read to her for an hour each day, she would give you a certain salary—small, you know—but then, an addition, as I suggested—in short, one hundred pounds a year."

"To read to her?" said Fitzgerald, with a sudden flush on his forehead. "Isn't that more like the occupation of a waiting-maid?"

"Oh no, certainly not," said Mr. Scobell, with an eagerness which showed that he had been looking forward to this objection. "Not at all, I assure you. That is just the mistake you make. What Mrs. Chetwynd must have first of all is an intelligent and

cultivated reader, who knows about politics and literature and what's going on. Very good people go to her house—the best, indeed; and she wants to know what is going on. Very well; the poor old lady is nearly blind; she can't read; what more natural than that she should say to herself, 'Well, now, if I can find an intelligent young literary man who could spare me an hour or so, he could pick out just such things as are important, and I should have the advantage of his judgment in literary matters, and it might be some little help to him.' She is a very kindly and thoughtful old lady, let me tell you, Fitzgerald; and before rejecting her offer at once, you ought to think over it——"

"Oh, I am very much obliged to her, and to you also," said Fitzgerald, who was obviously hesitating. "And any sort of settled income I should be glad to have. But—but if all this is needed, who has been reading to her hitherto?"

"Why, she told you, don't you remember?" said Mr. Scobell, who perceived that he was

likely to be successful in his commission. "Her niece. But then Miss Chetwynd's personal occupations seem to take up more and more of her time. You have no idea what that girl has on her hands. And so sharp she is—as sharp as a needle; by Jove, she caught me yesterday afternoon as clean as ever you saw! I said to her, 'Well, now, Miss Chetwynd, I hear a great deal of this Society of yours, and of what you are doing in the East-end.' 'Oh yes,' she says, 'people talk of what a few of us are trying to do, and they think it heroic and interesting and all that, whereas it is quite prosaic and simple; but what they won't do is to bother themselves to give us the least help.' Well, don't you know, my dear f'lah, this was rather a poser; so I said to her—there were some distinguished people in the room, mind you—Professor——, and Professor——, and Canon——, and a lot more—and I said to her that I wasn't afraid to go down to Shoreditch or Shadwell or whatever the blessed place was, and lend a helping hand now and again. I have plenty of time; I have a

little spare cash now and then; I thought it was natural enough. No; she wouldn't hear of it; I knew nothing about the people; indiscreet charity was the worst enemy they had; and so on. 'Well,' I said to her, like an ass as I was, 'you must be very confident, when you refuse help in that way.' 'Oh, but I don't,' she says as sharp as a needle. 'If you really wish to help us, you can do so; you can buy us three hundred filters; we are very badly in want of them.' Three hundred filters! And then Professor—— laughed, as if it was a great joke; but I can tell you I wasn't going to be jumped upon by a jackass-headed old idiot like that, so I said, just as I might be talking to you, 'Of course you shall have them, Miss Chetwynd.' And now the mischief is I haven't the slightest notion what they'll cost—five shillings, half a sovereign, a couple of guineas——"

"Oh, they are not so dear as that," said Fitzgerald. "That one over there is a very good little filter, and it only cost me half-a-crown."

"Half-a-crown. Thirty-seven pounds ten. Well, if it had been a hundred and thirty-seven pounds ten I declare I'd have paid it to take the wind out of the sails of that lantern-jawed old Behemoth. But about this matter of the reading, Fitzgerald. I did not undertake that you would accept; but I said I would try to persuade you. A hundred a year isn't much——"

"It is a great deal to me," said Fitzgerald, frankly.

"Very well. What is an hour's time a day? And there's more than that. The very best people in London go to that house. A young man ought to see sassiety. I think it is a great chance——"

"Oh, but I can't go at all if I am to see any one!" exclaimed Fitzgerald, in great dismay. "I did not understand that at all——"

"Of course you won't see them while you're there on duty—of course not. But surely you understand. This old lady is interested in you. She is a country-woman of yours. Something in your manner, or

accent, or something in your writing, reminds her of her nephew, who was just the whole world to her. And of course you will be recognised as a friendly visitor, not as a slave. You may meet people; my dear f'lah, it is a great chance for you! It is one of the very best houses in London; and it is not exclusive—Cabinet ministers, men of science, poets, painters, all sorts as well as the best-known members of the fashionable world. There is no house in London is more highly spoken of. My dear f'lah, you must be mad if you think twice!"

"Well, I won't think twice."

"That's right. And I said if you accepted you would call on her this evening at six: all the visitors will have gone by that time."

Accordingly, that evening, Fitzgerald called at the house in Hyde Park Gardens; and was immediately admitted and shown up to the drawing-room. Instead, however, of finding Mrs. Chetwynd there, he found her niece, who was seated at a table apparently engaged in painting, and who rose as he entered. He was disturbed and vexed, he

knew not why. He did not like meeting those clear and penetrating eyes, though indeed they were pretty eyes, and had some touch of friendliness in them as she spoke to him and said she would go and fetch her aunt. It seemed to him that he was taking over a woman's work; while she herself was addressing herself to the harder outside realities of the world. That was not a pleasant thought—especially if it had also occurred to her. He was somewhat relieved when the tall clear-eyed young lady, whose natural grace of manner somewhat softened the serious simplicity and dignity of her face and figure, left the room. Nay, he rejoiced to think that he had caught her painting. That was something pretty and feminine. As there was a complete silence outside the door he ventured to approach the table where she had been seated, to get a glimpse of her work. And then he found that instead of colouring Christmas cards, or finishing up a little bit of imaginary landscape, she had been engaged in copying on to a magic-lantern slide, from a scientific book lying

open there, the appearance of a magnified drop of impure water, with the most ghastly creatures squirming about within the charmed circle. He had just time to retreat a step or two when aunt and niece entered.

The little old lady received him in the most gracious way, and begged him to be seated, while her niece was making her comfortable in an easy-chair by the fire. That accomplished, Miss Chetwynd took up her painting materials and disappeared.

"I hope I have not disturbed your niece," said Fitzgerald, anxiously, "by calling at this hour."

"Oh, dear no!" the old lady said, warming her mittened hands at the fire. "Oh, dear no. I daresay she is off to her magic-lantern now. She means to frighten some of her poor people into using filters; and your friend Mr. Scobell, by the way, is going to get her the filters. She is a very good girl, is Mary; and very industrious; I only hope she won't catch some dreadful fever in those places. But don't talk to her, Mr. Fitzgerald, if you please, about her work.

She says there is too much talk. Oh, by the way, perhaps I am going too fast in assuming that you are going to take pity on a poor old blind woman, and let her know what's going on?"

"If I can," said he, "but I scarcely know——"

"Oh, but you shall have absolute liberty," she said, blithely. "You shall order any books or newspapers that you like yourself; and I am looking forward to such a treat; for I have had to live for so long on the dry bones of science! You know, Mr. Fitzgerald, Mary is the best of girls; but she can't help thinking that I am interested in what interests her; and really, as you said so cleverly the other day, one gets weary of the frog's foot and would prefer a little human nature. And Mary laughs at me for a silly old woman when I have listened most patiently to her Post-Office Savings Banks scheme, and her plan for ventilating sick-rooms, and all about her hospital-nurses, and when I say to her, 'Mary, dear, just to go in to dinner with a pleasanter taste in the

mouth, won't you read me a chapter of *Consuelo?'* And really it is wonderful what that girl gets through in a day; learning herself and teaching other people; and afraid of no amount of trouble or disappointment. Oh yes; and I can see that her reading is not thrown away: for sometimes, when the scientifics, as I call them, are here, though she does not say much, you can hear that she has just hit the point in dispute; and they are all very kind to her, I'm sure. Now, Mr. Fitzgerald, I am so glad that this has been arranged; and I hope we shall try to make it not very irksome to you. What hour would suit you best?"

"But that is for you, Mrs. Chetwynd, to say," answered the young man. "Any hour, indeed, would suit me; for I have no definite occupation at the moment, since the *Household Magazine* was stopped."

"A quarter to six in the evening would suit me very well, then," said the old lady. "For at this time of the year we keep open table—a quarter to seven *table d'hôte* in fact, without any ceremony, and anybody who

likes can drop in, and then be off to their lectures and what not. That is very useful for Mary; she sees everybody; and has not got to sacrifice the whole evening. Well, you see, Mr. Fitzgerald, if you could make it convenient to call at a quarter to six, and spend an hour with the newspapers or new books, I should go in to meet my friends quite coached up, and then I shouldn't have to ask them whether Queen Anne was dead or not. And I know you'll have pity on me, Mr. Fitzgerald; and not choose books that are too dreadfully learned. We will leave the bismuth in the moon alone, even if you have to read me the broken-hearted poems in the provincial newspapers."

And so, with a very pretty little laugh, and an appointment for the very next evening, this interview was concluded; and Fitzgerald, as he walked away down through the gas-lit streets to Fulham, was thinking that this time there could be no mistake, that this time he could definitely assure Kitty that he was in possession of a settled income, however small. And there were other things that

occurred to him. He could not help regarding it as one of the oddest possible results of the conditions of modern society that he, a man, should have been constituted, as it were, the champion of sentiment as against science, and that his antagonist, the champion of science, should prove to be a young lady of very considerable personal attractions. The situation seemed to him novel; and he kept wondering what Mary Chetwynd thought of it, if, indeed, she had time to think of such trivial things at all.

CHAPTER II.

NEIGHBOURS.

To be a man of letters in London!—how many young people, in remote corners of the country, are at this present moment thinking that there can be nothing finer than that, and perhaps secretly wondering whether they might not risk the venture and try to make such a career their own. When Fitzgerald resolved to quit the security of that provincial newspaper-office and try his fortune in the great capital, he was fairly equipped for the enterprise. His education, if not extensive, had been thorough as far as it went; he was well-read; he had taken immense pains in mastering a certain simplicity of style; he was familiar with many subjects and ways of life that the ordinary writer, mostly a dweller in towns, knows very little about; he had youth, health, and a frank face; and his

heart was fired with love, which was likely to add a little touch of poetical glamour to his productions. But his experiences fell far short of his buoyant hopes. His ignorance of shorthand barred the familiar gateway of the newspapers. Then he found that those magazines which were the most ready to accept his contributions were the least prompt in paying for them. Moreover, he had sadly to confess to himself that those contributions which he could get accepted were not literature at all. They were mere manufacture — compilations in the British Museum. At first he had aimed at something higher. Disregarding Hilton Clarke's disparagement of criticism, he had made some careful studies of one or two of the pre-Shakspearian dramatists : no editor would look at them. Then he tried essays on social and domestic subjects ; but every avenue seemed to be blocked. Occasionally he had the satisfaction of finding a bit of translation from Catullus or Horace accepted ; though he rightly judged that magazine editors looked on such things as handy for filling up

half a page. No, there was no help for it; he might cultivate the higher literature for his own satisfaction, but if he wanted to supplement that one hundred pounds a year he was now in receipt of, and so be able to write hopeful letters to Kitty, what he had to sit down and compose was a useful little paper on "The Successive Discoveries of Kaolin" or "The Origin of the English Race-horse," or some such practical subject. It was not literature; but it brought Kitty a little nearer.

John Ross was doing him a mischief. It was all very well for the Scotch artist to take this young companion of his about with him, and give him a new pair of eyes, and colour up the world for him; but unconsciously to himself Fitzgerald was adopting in his own work Ross's way of looking at things. Ross was purely and simply an impressionist; a vivid suggestion was what he aimed at, careless of subsequent detail or even precise accuracy of form. And it was so delightful to Fitzgerald to walk abroad with this man, and see the commonest things in the world

intensified with a new interest, that he insensibly yielded to the fascination and forgot that he was a writer and not a painter. The objects of life became to him so many pieces of colour; when he looked at a long terrace of buildings shining clear on a summer's day, it was not to guess at the rent of the houses, or wonder whether they were well drained, or whether there were any sick people there unable to come out into the sunlight, but to observe that the warm brilliant mass of yellow made the blue above more intense. If the life of a man of letters in London, so far as he had experience of it, was disappointing and prosaic, these occasional walks with his artist companion brought back some poetry into the world. "*Anch' io son pittore*," he might have said, so wonderfully did his faculty of observation develop under this rough-and-ready, quarrelsome, enthusiastic tutelage; but he was much too wise to attempt anything with the brush.

"Man," said John Ross to him one day, as they were walking out in the suburbs, "what a grand thing it must be to be like you!"

"Oh, indeed," said Master Willie, whose fortunes did not seem to himself to be so flourishing.

"Ay, just to be able to look at the things that nature puts before ye, and never to have a thocht o' how ye're going to make money out o' them. What wouldna I give to be a laddie again, just for an hour, and lie down on a warm bank in the sun, and watch the clear waters of the burnie twirlin round the stanes, and the speedwells on the banks, and the red rowans on the trees, and everything like that, and just to let your eyes drink it in without even thinking of the infernal pent-box. Man, it's a terrible thing to have to go through the world just conteenually warslin wi' tubes o' colours. There's no two things that I see thegither that I havena to take the balance of; it's a disease; confound it, it's a disease; I'm a man; why shouldna I be allowed to go through the world and look at it like another man? It's a pent-box that's the millstone round my neck. Why should I care about they palings?" he said, as they were passing a cabbage garden. "I'm not

going to pent them! What is it to me what colour they are!"

"Well, that can't bother you anyway," said Fitzgerald, with a laugh, "for they haven't any colour."

"Dinna be so sure about that, laddie," said the other. "Ye think they're gray, I suppose."

"Well, aren't they?"

"Oh, ay. No doubt, if ye took a bit o' the wood in your hand, ye would find it gray and colourless enough. But just you try to fix your eyes on the wooden paling and on the violent greens o' the cabbages at the same time. Is the wood quite so gray?"

"No," Fitzgerald had to admit. "Not quite so gray. In fact, rather lilac, isn't it? In fact, it is quite a pinkish lilac, if you look at the two together."

"Ay, and that's what ye've got to paint, my laddie. But if people 'll no buy my pictures of Cookham they're no likely to buy a picture of a cabbage gairden in Chelsea."

"But after all, Ross," said his companion, "writing people are just as badly off as

painting people; for they have to keep watching and watching——"

"But they havena to warsle wi' pigments, man!" the other said, impatiently. "When ye see a thing is yellow, ye say it's yellow, and there's an end; but the painter has got to get that particular quality out o' an infernal tin tube, and even then put it into all sorts o' relations with the things round it. I wish to heaven I had been brought up a painter of shop-doors and shutters, and I could have had my own way wi' fine colour and naething stepping in to spoil it."

"It's all nonsense your complaining like that," Fitzgerald said finally. "Instead of complaining, you ought to be thankful. The difference between you and other people is that you have trained yourself to see more. You see beautiful things at every turn, where they see nothing. Is there any advantage in being partially blind?"

Had John Ross kept more closely to his studio in the Fulham Road no doubt Fitzgerald's life at this time would have been a pleasanter one. But he was much away,

especially when he had got a few pounds for a sketch, and his neighbour, up there in the solitary room, felt the winter nights to be long and dark. The hour spent in reading and talking to Mrs. Chetwynd was the bright spot of the day; when he returned to his lonely lodgings and this almost hopeless manufacture of articles in which he took nothing but the most perfunctory interest, sometimes the world seemed to weigh heavily on him. But curiously enough, it was always at such moments, when circumstances seemed to hem him in, when the battle of life appeared to be going against him, when the future seemed growing dark indeed, that his imagination broke through these toils and carried him into a sphere of creation where his work was a joy to him. No matter how insignificant the result might be, it was the expression of something within him that he himself could not well understand; it was not of the slightest consequence to him what editors might think of it. One night, for example, he was labouring away at an article on "Some particulars of the Earthquake at

Lisbon." He had been for two days at the British Museum; and he had copious notes before him. He was trying to make the picture as graphic as he could; but it was distressing work; and he did not even know where to send it when he had it finished. Suddenly he heard a slight hissing sound in the fire—like that produced by rain falling down the short chimney. But he could hear no sound of rain on the slates. He went to the window; there was an absolute silence; but there were dark streaks crossing the orange glow of the lamp in the courtyard. He opened the window, and put out his hand: it was stung by the sharp, moist touch of snow. And then what must he needs do but hastily put on his cap, and issue out into the dark to feel this soft thing blowing all about him—touching his lips, his eyelashes, his hands—this soft, silent thing that made a wonder of the lonely streets. He wandered on and on in a sort of ecstasy; voices seemed calling to him from the past; he knew not whether to laugh or cry. His blood tingled with joy at the presence of this new strange

thing; and yet there was a kind of despair as if he yearned for some one far away; and there was a doom portending; an agony of love and terror and appeal. Then a phrase here or there; and it was a lover who spoke; and the voice of the sea could be heard now, in the awful caves. Quite blindly, like one in a dream, and not heeding the snow, he made his way back from the dark lanes to his room, and almost mechanically he sate down to his writing-table. He saw something before him not the least like what he had seen outside. It was more like the sea; and darkness; and the wild Irish coast. And with an impatient cast here and there for a rhyme, and all trembling, and even scarcely knowing quite the value of the phrases he was using, he put down on paper what seemed to him the voice of some one else, that he could hear far off in the night—

The wild March winds are blowing;
The trees are dark; the skies are gray;
O love, let us be going—
The evening gathers: far the way.

O do you hear the thunder
On Daramona's rocky isle —
The wild seas sweeping under
The ghostly cliffs of black Glengyle?

He rose, with a quick kind of sigh; pushed the paper away; and began mechanically to knock the snow from his sleeves and his coat. Then he went to the fire; and lit a pipe; and stared into the red coals as if he expected to see more pictures there. And then, after a time, he went back to the table; and took up the bit of paper; and calmly and critically regarded what he had written.

"Yes," he said to himself. "That's it. That's true. I will keep that for myself. There isn't an editor in London would give me twopence for it anyway; and the public would ask where the story was; but it has got to stand just as it is; it is a bit of my personal property for Kitty to inherit when she becomes a widow."

Just as he was putting away the bit of paper into a desk which contained a very considerable quantity of similarly useless scraps, a noise was heard below; and Fitz-

gerald's heart jumped up at the notion that perhaps John Ross had come back from Sonning, where he had been for a fortnight. There was a ready means of ascertaining. He took the poker and knocked twice on the floor. In response, there were three knocks on the roof of the studio. Then Fitzgerald made his way down the slippery steps; and caught Ross as he was in the act of lighting his stove.

"No, no; let that alone," he cried. "I've got a blazing fire in my bunk. Come along up. Man, I've got some sheep's tongues that'll make your mouth water; and a yard of French bread; only you must bring some whiskey with you. Come along; I want to hear all about Sonning, and I won't ask you to show me your sketches."

"Ye're in a cheerfu' frame of mind, laddie," said Ross, looking up. "Have ye been drinkin'?"

"No; what's worse, I've been neither eating nor drinking, and I'm desperately hungry."

"And so am I. Have you got any tobacco?"

"Plenty."

"Wait a minute then."

He went and got a cloth and dusted the snow off the packages he had brought in; and then he followed Fitzgerald up the staircase; and was soon engaged in helping him to lay the cloth of the supper-table and open the bottles and what not.

"But I want to ken what has put ye in such fine fettle, man," he said, at length, regarding his companion from across the table. "Some young lass in Ireland, I suppose, has been sending ye a true-love knot. Poor thing! a lassie should never let her sweetheart get so far away as this; it's no safe."

"It isn't that though. I've written something I am pleased with; something I am going to keep for myself," said Fitzgerald, frankly.

"Let us see it, then."

"Oh no. It wouldn't please any one else, I know."

"Then what is the use of it."

"None."

"And ye are going on amusing yourself with capers instead of getting money and furnishing a house for the lass: is that what ye mean?" said the other severely.

"What lass? What are you talking about?"

"I have my suspicions, my lad. But let's see what this is."

"Oh, very well," said Fitzgerald, at once going and fetching the sheet of scrawled paper.

John Ross bent his brows, and proceeded to read the verses line by line, which was an exquisite piece of torture for the writer of them.

"Where is Daramona?" said he, abruptly.

"I don't know."

When he had finished, he looked at it carefully again, and said, in rather a peevish sort of way—

"Well, but have ye nothing more to tell us?"

"No."

"It's a ghastly picture enough; oh ay, I admit that; but—but what is it about?"

"I told you you wouldn't be pleased

with it," said Fitzgerald, without any resentment.

"Ye might make some story——"

"Oh yes, I know quite well. I know what an editor would want. There would have to be a third verse with two dead bodies washed up by the sea somewhere; or some definite thing like that. Well, I am not going to patch it up for sale. I am going to keep it as it is—of no use to any one but the owner."

John Ross was not satisfied. He looked at the verses again, and then grumbled—

"It's a good suggestion—it's a capital suggestion—but why dinna ye follow it out?"

"Some people," said Master Willie, slyly, "might hint that about some of your sketches; and yet you won't alter them."

"God bless me!" cried the other, staring at him. "Has the laddie gone daft? Writin' is not pentin', man! Do ye think the public are going to take the trouble to make a story for themselves?"

"I don't mean to ask them," said Fitzgerald, simply. "That is only a little bit for

my own private satisfaction. Won't you allow me as much as that? I don't find that eager competition among editors and publishers for my work that I should like. I think the world could get on without literary people—especially literary beginners."

But he himself seemed to detect some kind of false note in this—some echo of what Hilton Clarke might have said. So he added, frankly—

"No, I'm not going to give in yet. And I have got hold of a subject that I think might do."

"What is't?" said his companion, filling his pipe. "No too big, I hope. Something practical?"

"Well, you know, when you were up the Thames, my suppers here were a little bit lonely," Fitzgerald proceeded to say, as he also drew in a chair to the fire. "And I discovered that you could get a plate of cold meat, or a bit of fowl, and a glass of ale, at the *Green Man*, for sixpence. That again entitled you to go into the parlour and have a smoke. I went in, and made a discovery.

There are cronies who come there, every evening, and discuss the affairs of the nation. My goodness! I have heard extraordinary statements made in the smoking-rooms of inns; but never anything quite so fine. And of course, as a stranger, I had to sit quiet and listen; but what I was thinking was that there must be a large population in this country who get their ideas and information from sources that the governing classes don't know anything about. What are they, then? Not the ordinary daily papers; for I read them. And this isn't the only bar-parlour or smoking-room I've been in; and it seemed to me that a series of articles on public-house politics might really be of use. These men have votes."

"Ay, the sources of their information, did ye say?" said Ross, grimly. "Their own heads, maybe?"

"But then," urged Fitzgerald, "when you hear a man make the absurdest statement—about the Prime Minister having written so-and-so to the Pope—and when he declares he saw the letter in print, and when every-

body accepts the statement, you begin to ask how such stories can gain currency——"

"The impudence o' the one man, and the ignorance o' the ithers, I should think," said Ross.

"No, for these things are talked of as matters of common knowledge; and yet the ordinary organs of public opinion know nothing of them—indeed, they are quite preposterous. You know, my father keeps an inn. I did not go much into the smoking-room; but I heard things from time to time; and you wouldn't believe the stories that are commonly accepted about the Royal Family, the members of the Government, the House of Lords, and so on——"

"Ye're right there," Ross said. "I would *not* believe them."

"The old gentlemen who meet at the *Green Man* are very loyal at all events," Fitzgerald continued. "Will you come round to-morrow night and listen to them? Oh no; you'd better not; they don't talk over respectfully about Scotchmen."

"I'll come round wi' ye, laddie, if ye like;

but what I want to know is how ye're going to get any bread and butter out o' writing down the idiotcy of a lot of bemuddled auld beer-drinkers."

"But they have votes!" contested Fitzgerald. "And there are thousands and thousands of them throughout the country; and their opinions spread; and surely it is of importance to know what they are saying. If it is absurd, if it is ludicrous, so much the better for me. I don't see why a solemn discussion on the only fit and proper way to govern Frenchmen, by these profound students of history, should not be made amusing enough."

"Oh, that's it, is it? Ye go and get admitted into a brotherhood o' philosophers, and ye watch and wait, and then when they are warmed into friendship and confidence wi' their pipes and their ale, and when their poor wandering old wits begin to dance and stagger about a bit, then ye begin your thumb-nail sketches — you, sittin' in the corner. Why, man, it's like making a fool o' your fayther."

"I think it's a very good thing," said Fitzgerald, with a laugh, "that the one half of the world should know what the other half are saying."

"Get away wi' ye," said Ross, resentfully. "Do ye mean to tell me ye will give a fair and honest report? Do ye mean to tell me there will be anything but gibes and jeers and gross misrepresentations? And you, a laddie just out o' school, to make fun o' men o' mature years, who have pondered over the course o' the world's ways, and learnt the lessons of life from A, B, C, to X, Y, Z! That is a nice work to undertake! Fathers of families, with the work o' the day over, and maybe glad to get away for an hour from a scolding wife, and doing their best for their country in talking over public affairs, and enjoying a quiet glass in warmth and security; and to have this Mephistopheles there wi' his note-book——"

"If you were to come with me for a night or two," said Fitzgerald, "you might make a few sketches. There are some splendid heads—of the regular old John Bull type, with

a churchwarden added. Then we could make a book of the reprinted articles, with your sketches of the people."

His companion glanced at him.

"Your brain is quick, laddie, for new projects."

"But that's what they come to," said Master Willie, indicating, somewhat sadly, his open desk. "They are all nicely tied up there, in wrappers, and addressed to myself."

"There's a mine o' wealth in that desk, man," said Ross, sharply. "When I am an Academeecian, and you are the editor of a daily newspaper, we'll both find out the value o' they sketches in that desk there, and in my studio below. Have I no told ye that already until I'm tired? Ye are in too great a hurry, man. Some day ye'll be glad enough to get hold o' these ideas that ye are flinging about ye now."

"Some day?" echoed Fitzgerald. "But in the meantime?"

"In the meantime," said he, rising and putting on his big cloak and his cap, "I'm

going down below to my bed. And in the meantime begin your Teniers sketches, and good luck to ye; and dinna fash yourself about what's before ye, so long as ye've meat, drink, and clothes; and if there's a young lass in the case, as I jalouse, tell her no to drive any man's cattle, but wait and give the world its ain time to turn. Good-night, laddie," he said, as he opened the door and looked out, "I'm glad there's no moor to cross on a night like this."

CHAPTER III.

TWO LETTERS.

"To my trusty and well-beloved Coulin, These:—It is quite true, my dear Willie, that my letters to you have been very short lately; but you have no idea how I have been bothered and worried in coming to terms about that other tour in the south, and then I have had to try and pacify papa. He has taken it into his head that he ought to know more about you and our 'prospects.' Isn't that a horrid word? It is like 'matrimony,' or 'nuptial settlements,' or something in a lawyer's office. I tell him that we are not going to do anything rash; that I for one am quite content to be as I am; and when he writes long letters about the importance of being settled in life and the possibility of his not being long in the world, what can I do but gently remind him that I have earned

my own living for a good many years, and have no great fear of being unable to do so? Poor dear papa, he is very kind, but he worries dreadfully. And really I don't know what to say to him. If you were still the sub-editor of that poor defunct magazine, that would be something definite. Shall I tell him you are private secretary to a great lady? Of course, I, too, wish you had something more settled: but do not imagine, dear Willie, that I am grumbling; for after all are we not just as well off in every respect as we were before we ever saw each other, and why should we not be quite content with things as they are? I hate writing like this. It is like drawing out a marriage-contract. If you were here just for two minutes—I can imagine your coming in at the door over there, and looking round to see that Miss Patience was not in the room—we should understand each other at once. And if you were at the open door now, do you think I would be long at this table? Don't you think I might meet you half-way, even if the ink-bottle were to be sent spinning across

the floor? And you to talk of the coldness of my letters!

"Besides all that worry, I have been hard at work with Professor ——; and fancy the difficulty of doing that by correspondence! He sets me the most terrible tasks; and as it is all science and no sound it is not very lively. But really when you look at some of the songs that are most popular now in drawing-rooms—the air some common phrase, or perhaps borrowed, and of course changing to minor in the second part, and the accompaniment a few simple chords, only fit for children's practising—it seems possible for one to do something a little better. And then shouldn't I like to be able to set one of your songs to music—I mean something like proper music; I think I should not grumble over studying the counterpoint of *that* accompaniment. Do you think I would charge my Coulin a heavy royalty for singing *that* song? There, now: why don't you gentlemen of the press set to work and crush that royalty system? It is most mischievous; and the very best singers are giving in to it now, and

of course the greater stupid the composer is the more eager is he to make the royalty on the sales big. Then the public are stupid, and don't remember that a good singer *can make even the singing of scales pathetic;* and any kind of song sounds as if it were fine if a good singer takes trouble with it. But you are not interested. I can see you are very nearly throwing my poor letter in the fire. But supposing that I put it this way, that A (this sounds like the Professor, but I'm not going to teach *you* harmony), who can sing a little, marries B, who is very fond of singing and music generally. Then they grow older; or A's voice gives out; is there to be no more music? On the contrary, A having been a good little girl, and having devoted a fearful amount of time to the study of music and to practising, can still play B to sleep after dinner. More than that, if they get into trouble, can she not give music-lessons? I believe this is a clear case of Q. E. D.: is it not, Master Willie?

"But everything in this letter is pure nonsense, and not to be heeded, except the

tremendous fact that in ten days *I shall be in Cork again!* think of it!—the very same rooms, too; and the same old piano; and the same little iron gate outside, which used to give such a queer rusty growl and squeak as a sort of friendly good-night to Master Willie, and a hint to come early the next morning, if there were any blue-bells and campions to be looked for out in the woods. Alas! there will be no blue-bells or anything else now—mud, I suppose; and I shall sit at the rainy window, and not stir out until it is time to go away down into the smoky town. There will be nobody there now to make all the place wild and romantic; and to stuff people's heads full of dreams; and to make a poor girl think she never saw anything so lovely as a street in Cork, when it was pouring wet—and the rain from the umbrella all the time running down her left shoulder and arm, because her companion was so careless. And there won't be anybody to say nice things about her in the *Cork Chronicle;* or to walk home with her up the steep hill; or to stop and talk just for a minute or a half-hour or so at the

little gate. And what is Inisheen like now?—I suppose the sea dashing all over the shore; the villas shut up; the town a puddle. Sure 'tis not to Inisheen that I'm going! The only comfort would be that the ghosts and pixies of the neighbourhood would have gone. What do the fairies do when it is wet? It must be most uncomfortable up in that glen, with all the branches dripping and no leaves on the trees, and everything damp and cold and miserable. I never heard of fairies in winter.

"But about Inisheen, dear Willie, seriously. I wish you would let me know a little more clearly about that promise you made me give you. I have heard that in Scotland if two people only say before other people that they are man and wife, that is enough, and they are married! I have never been to Scotland, and I don't know; but I should think people might be too quick and then repent. I want to know if the promise we made that night (wasn't it a beautiful night too!) is anything more than a promise? I have been wondering whether it might be

the way young people used to get married when their parents were against it, or the priests perhaps. Situated as we are, sometimes I think it was scarcely wise to bind ourselves like that—and then again I say 'Bother these doubts and troubles; it's all because Professor ——'s conundrums are too difficult.' And I am not going to bother you with them, dear Willie; for you must have enough to think of; and I meant this to be the longest and kindest letter ever written, after what you said about my not caring. I do care. You have no right to say that I don't—*and if you were here I would prove it, even to your satisfaction.* There now. So don't say another word about not caring; but write me a long, nice, pleasant letter, professing yourself quite contented with everything that Providence and I have done for you, and telling me all the news of what you are doing, and how you occupy your time, and whether you ever think of poor banished me. You are very ungrateful; you have not the slightest notion of how good I am to you—to be sitting up writing

to you like this, when every sensible creature in Belfast is in bed. The fire has gone out; and the room is dreadfully cold; yet here am I writing away with stiff fingers, and the difficulty is to know how to stop. For *I do want you to believe* that I did not mean my letters to be cold; I think it was the weather that got into them; and if you wait till a thaw comes, and read them over again, you will find them quite different. This is all at present from,

"Your loving KITTY.

"*P. S.*—Miss Patience is very kind to me just now. She wrote a letter, which she showed me, to the *Northern Whig* here the other day, about the numbers of beggars in the streets; and as sure as ever was, the very next morning there was an article in the newspaper beginning 'From the number of letters which we receive complaining of the prevalence of mendicity in this town,' etc. Oh, my! At first she was so lofty she would scarcely speak to me, for she considers me a frivolous kind of creature, but afterwards she

grew more gracious, and has been quite compassionately kind to me ever since. Last night she made me wear her gloves on the way home, for I had forgotten mine, and it *was* cold. She even said that your verses in *Chambers's Journal*, which I showed her, were written with much taste, though she added that she thought this was scarcely a time for writing poetry, considering the serious state of public affairs. Never mind, Willie; there is one person at least who knows better than that; and you need not be afraid that *she* does not appreciate your poetry, as the world will some day.

"Good-night, good-night!—K."

Many and many a time did Master Willie read over this letter, wondering to which to attach the more importance—the obvious outward cheerfulness, or the curious half-suggested little admissions of trouble and doubt. He was so anxious that Kitty should not be anxious! And it was hard on Kitty to be away in those towns, practically alone—for that fool of a creature who was supposed

to be her companion, apparently lived only for the pestering of editors—and not hearing very definite news of her lover's success. The space that separated them seemed great enough; but it was the thought of the time that might separate them that he was afraid would weigh on Kitty's spirits. And so, in answering her, he resolved to take no notice of these involuntary backslidings of hers; but to assume that she still had the hope and high courage that possessed her when he and she parted at Inisheen.

"My darling Kitty," he wrote,—"You are all wrong about Inisheen. It is far more beautiful now than in the summer; this is the time it is worth living in—not when idle and fashionable young ladies come down to the little villas and show off their finery along the sands, neglecting their music, and becoming impertinent to their companions. You should see the real Inisheen when the frosty sun shines red through the thin fog; and you get a touch of crimson on the shallow waters of the harbour; and the heavy craft are lying

high and dry on the yellow ooze. Just now, my dear Kitty, you would find the sun setting behind the sea, not away up behind the land, and the cliffs looking splendid. Then at night—think of the moonlight on the frost-hardened moor, with the ice-ponds quite silvery here and there; that is the time for the duck, I can tell you. You think the people are depressed now? Why, this is the sociable time of the year; when you come home stiff with cold to a blazing fire and a warm room; and then you get your dinner over, and people come in, and you have the whiskey put on the table (that's for you, Miss Kitty, not for me) and the kettle steaming on the fire, and then the jokes and stories begin. Then you want to know where the fairies go to in the winter? I can tell you all about that. Mind you, the glen you speak of is quite lovely just now, with red berries and dark green bramble-stems, and lots of colour you don't find at all in the monotonous summer green; but that does not matter; for I confess that the fairies at this time do spend the most of their

time feasting and singing and dancing in the great halls within the mountains, though they have scouts sent out from time to time to see what is going on. There was a great banquet given by Don Fierna on the night of Tuesday last in the hall that comes nearest to the hillside above the well that you know. It was a very splendid affair; the vast cavern was all lit up by millions of glowworms placed along the rocks; but besides that there were innumerable will-o'-the wisps moving through the air, so that you could see all the colours of the various costumes quite well, although most of the light fell on the long banquet-board, and that again lit up the smiling faces of the ladies and their knights. At the head of the long table Don Fierna sate in state; a terrible, huge person nearly two feet in height, with a prodigious black moustache and heavy eyebrows; he wore a Spanish hat of black velvet, a scarlet cloak, and on his breast hung his thick gold chain of office, all glittering with precious stones. On his right sate the boy-king of the fairies (who is his heir-apparent), but he was a very beautiful

little king, with large blue eyes and golden hair, and he wore a cloak of purple velvet clasped at the neck with gold, and also a crown of pure gold starred with sapphires. Opposite him—that is on Don Fierna's left—sate the boy-king's bride; she was more like a fairy than any of them; she was so slight and fair and delicate; and she wore a cloak of cream-white velvet, which had a scarlet flower where that was clasped, and her crown was not of gold, but of pure silver with scarlet berries set into it. The other knights and ladies were in all sorts of different costumes and colours; and so were the servitors, who were hurrying this way and that, with the materials of the feast. Oh, did I tell you that in the distance you could hear nightingales? For this is where the nightingales retire to in the winter; but they would be too noisy; so they are shut up in an adjoining cave, and you can only hear their singing like a sort of continuous waterfall. Well, you know, Kitty, I need not tell you all the things they had at the banquet; for the *menu* was rather long; only this, that the

wine they drank was made of the honey that you get in the heads of pink clover, and that whereas the lords and the ladies drank out of acorn-cups, Don Fierna's flagon consisted of the shell of a plover's egg set in a handle of bog-oak. Well, when they had got down to the end of the list, Don Fierna rose; and the moment they saw him rise, each lord and lady struck a small silver gong in front of them, so that instantly there was a sort of soft tingling music rising from the whole table and filling the cave; and this immediately hushed the servitors to silence.

"'Your Majesties, my noble lords and gracious ladies,' said Don Fierna, 'before we proceed to the dance, I have a question to ask. What is the name of the mortal who was last at the Well of Vows?'

"All the eyes of the assemblage were now turned to the lower end of the cavern, where near the immense gate, and half-hidden in the dusk, was a rather tall soldier-looking fairy, dressed entirely in blue, with a blue feather in his cap, and a long silver sword by his side.

"'Catherine, my liege,' he said. (It's a curious fact, Kitty, but the fairies always call mortals by their Christian names. I don't know why it is; perhaps it is in imitation of the Church; or perhaps they found that human beings were always changing their surname.)

"'Say, where is this Catherine?' Don Fierna continued—and you could hear his voice through the whole place, though he did not speak so loudly either. But everybody was listening intently.

"'In the north, my liege. It is understood she is coming to your Highness's city of Cork.'

"'She has been observed?'

"'Assuredly, my liege.'

"'She remains faithful to her vow?'

"At this all the ladies lowered their eyes, and looked at each other, wondering.

"'She does, my liege.'

"The words were pronounced with emphasis; and no sooner were they heard than the whole assemblage once more struck the little silver gongs, and it was as if the hollows

of the cavern overhead were all filled with the singing of birds.

"'Your Majesties, my lords and ladies,' said Don Fierna, 'we may despatch this piece of business before the revels begin. This faithful one must be rewarded. When she comes to our royal city of Cork, you will assure to her sweet sleep, sweet dreams. You will instruct your attendants. You will banish from her idle fears; you will guard her from the phantoms of the night; the dark and sleep shall be as sweet to her as the day.'

"With that all down the table there was a continuous 'Yes,' 'Yes,' 'Yes,' so that the sound was just like the wind in summer stirring through the beech-trees. Don Fierna then gave his hand to the young queen in white velvet; and the king her sweetheart turned to the noble dame who was next him; and so the whole company went away two and two down the great hall (but leaving enough space between the couples for the ladies' trains to be fairly seen). And then, when the lords and ladies had disappeared into the ball-room, the servitors, in their green

jackets and gray hose, forthwith jumped into the chairs of their masters and mistresses; and there was such a noise of laughing and feasting that the very nightingales could no longer make themselves heard.

"And so you see, my dear Kitty, that so far from having anything to fear from Don Fierna and the fairies and the elves of Inisheen, they really have you under their protection; and it is not the least use your worrying about what you promised at the well, and imagining dark things, for indeed, promise or no promise, the result will be quite the same. Only, it seems to me, it would be base ingratitude on our part for all the kindness of the invisible world of Don Fierna if we were not to make that pilgrimage. And only once in seven years too! Dear Kitty, think what a trip that will be! Of course, in married life, if what every one says is true, and if we should prove to be only like other people, one's views of things must naturally get changed; and no doubt the romance of love may get a little tempered down by familiarity and custom; and you cannot have

such a lot of things to talk over as two people who only meet from time to time and have all their future to settle. But just think what a reopening of the past that will be to us two; how we shall seem to see ourselves again standing there as we were seven years before; and if we have had our quarrels or misunderstandings, surely that will be the place to make everything up. My darling, don't look on your promise of that night as something terrible, something to haunt you; but rather as a bit of romance added to the facts of your life—something that you can recall in after days with a kind of smile, perhaps, but yet with a tender smile, and something that will remind you through possibly more prosaic years of what you and I were thinking of once. Is not that sensible, Sweet eyes?

"About your father; you must let him understand, my darling, that I am quite as anxious as he can be that I should have something definite and settled; but Rome was not built in a day; and if you and I are content to wait for a while, I suppose that is

our own business. Do you know, Kitty, that you are very profuse in your assurances that you are content with things as they are. I am not; not at all. I try to imagine what our life will be when we are together; and of course that makes me very impatient when I find another stumblingblock in my way. However, there is no reason for grumbling. Plenty of people have come to London to try to earn a living, and been worse served than I have been. I have one hundred pounds a year certain; I have nearly all my time my own; and I am writing so much and offering it in so many quarters that I must in time find out what the newspapers and magazines would wish to have, or what it is they object to. Mind you, I have my own ideals; and when the chance serves, I work at them; but in this absolute fight for life, I have got to make just such bricks as the builder will buy. Some day, Kitty—when you and I can plan things together—after the fight is over, and we have won the fortress—then I shall be able to work in my own way, careless of everybody, and who knows but

that one might then 'strike for honest fame'? I shall look in your eyes; the old days at Inisheen will come back; that will be inspiration enough.

"In the meantime, dear Kitty, if I can't tell you of anything definite and settled as regards my literary work, this at least will please you. I have been thinking over a series of papers describing the nonsense that is talked about politics and political men in tavern parlours and the like—some of it being exquisitely absurd; and I wrote one paper and sent it to the *Hyde Park Journal*. To my astonishment (and a little bit of delight) it appears in this evening's edition; and I send you a copy, though it won't interest you much. Now the *Hyde Park* is a very good paper; and if they will only continue the series, it will be an excellent thing for me, for the varieties of human folly, especially public-house politics folly, are endless. So you see things are not so bad; and you are a good girl to be working so hard—so good that I am not going to talk any more to you about wretched newspapers and my scribbling,

and hopes and disappointments. Don't forget that I love you. I shall be glad to hear of your being in Cork, for then Don Fierna will have his little scouts looking after you and protecting you. Do not forget that I love you."

CHAPTER IV.

A SYMPOSIUM.

But if Fitzgerald's efforts to obtain a footing in literature had so far been productive mostly of disappointment, he was very clearly succeeding in another direction. Mrs. Chetwynd made no secret of her interest in, and wish to befriend, this young man who seemed to her to resemble in many ways the nephew whom she had lost; and the good old lady, with much tact and delicacy, hinted that he himself might make the suggestion when any opportunity offered. It is not improbable that, if Fitzgerald had asked her for funds wherewith to start another magazine, she would have consented; but he had had enough of such experiments.

In the meantime he strove to make his duties as little of a sinecure as was possible. To his own great delight he had absolute

carte blanche as regarded the ordering of new books or reviews; and he diligently read the one and glanced over the other, so as to let his patroness know what was going on. But when it actually came to the imparting of this information, the chances were that the little old lady would begin by asking him something about his own affairs, and that not unfrequently led to a mere gossip about the south of Ireland. Once or twice, indeed, she inadvertently called him "Frank;" and then apologised for the mistake, with a quiet tear or two. On another occasion, when he was about to leave, she happened to hear the rain beating heavily against the window.

"Oh, but you must not go out in such a shower, Mr. Fitzgerald," she said. "Or you might ask Saunders to get you a waterproof."

Indeed, she herself rang, and—with a little hesitation, which Fitzgerald understood perfectly—told the man where he would find the coat. Fitzgerald thanked her, of course; and went out, and down

into the hall. But something, he scarcely knew what, forbade his making use of this waterproof.

"Whose is it?" he said to the footman who brought it to him.

"It was Mr. Frank's, sir."

He had guessed as much.

"Oh, thank you," he said, rather absently. "I don't think I shall need it. I have not very far to go."

But if Fitzgerald was slow to avail himself, on his own account, of those hinted offers which the kind old lady had made him, it occurred to him that he might do something for his friend John Ross. Mrs. Chetwynd had heard a good deal about the Scotch artist in Fitzgerald's descriptions of their conjoint occupations and country walks; and at last she said she would like to see some of his work.

"I do not promise to buy any," said the old lady, with her pleasant smile, "for there is scarcely any place we could put them."

Indeed the house was pretty well filled with the ordinary pictorial adornments of an

English dwelling—little pieces of Dutch *genre* in heavy old-fashioned frames; gloomy landscapes a long way after Salvator Rosa; one or two imitations of Wilkie; and a large number of historical engravings, glorious in incident, but less satisfactory in draughtsmanship.

"Besides," added Mrs. Chetwynd, "Mary would accuse me of extravagance, so long as I disapprove of her spending her money on a nine-inch telescope."

"A nine-inch telescope?" said Fitzgerald, in surprise—for he had understood that Miss Chetwynd was a young lady of considerable fortune. "Surely that cannot amount to much?"

"So I thought," said the old lady, laughing, "when I heard of it at first. But it appears that the nine inches refer to the diameter of the glass; and I am told the thing looks more like a thirty-two pounder. And then she spends so much of her money on these wretched people of hers. Well, it is her own, poor thing. I think I must let her have her way. She shall have

the window in her room altered; and she shall have her thirty-two pounder; and then I will buy some of your friend's pictures."

"Oh, but I could not have you buy them on my recommendation," said Fitzgerald, in some alarm. "That would never do. You must have some skilled advice—I don't know enough about pictures——"

"But according to your account, they are just the very paintings to suit a blind old woman," she said, brightly. "I shall see nothing of them but their colour, which you say is so good——"

"But—but I would ask you to have some one else's judgment, Mrs. Chetwynd," said he, earnestly. "Of course, I think them good; I don't see how the work of a man who studies as hard as he does, and who can talk so ably about it, can be anything else. But if you will allow me, I will bring up a few of his sketches; and you might ask some one who is a good judge——"

"As for that, there will be no difficulty," she said, promptly. "We know several of the Academicians. It is not unusual for one

or other of them to drop in to dinner and have a chat with the scientifics."

"Academicians?" said Fitzgerald, uneasily. "Not *very* old ones?"

She named one or two.

"Oh," said he, gladly, "any one of these would do. I am not afraid of them."

But this conversation had results for himself as well as for his friend. Fitzgerald was in the habit of leaving a minute or two before a quarter to seven, which was the hour for Mrs. Chetwynd's *table d'hôte*, as she called it; and even then he sometimes encountered in the hall a guest who had strolled in before the proper time. But this talk about Ross's pictures had made him forgetful; and he was just about to ask his patroness some further question as to what kind of landscape she preferred, when a gong sounded below.

"Goodness gracious me!" exclaimed the old lady. "There is dinner; and Mary has not come back from South Kensington! Mr. Fitzgerald, will you kindly give me your arm downstairs—I am so blind now; and

the people will be coming in, and nobody to receive them!"

But at this very moment, Miss Chetwynd made her appearance—a trifle breathless, for she had run upstairs.

"Come away, auntie!" she said, cheerfully, as she hastily took off her bonnet and cloak and threw them on a chair. "But why don't you ever persuade Mr. Fitzgerald to stay to dinner? I know he dislikes scientific people——"

It is needless to say that this invitation was warmly seconded; and Fitzgerald, who was quite aware of the informal nature of this nightly *table d'hôte*, and who, perhaps, had some little curiosity to see in the flesh one or other of the celebrated people that Mrs. Chetwynd talked so much about, very gratefully and modestly accepted. He did not even make a pretence of refusing. Mary Chetwynd's proposal had been made so simply and frankly, that he met it with equal frankness. He walked into the dining-room after the two ladies, with much calmness; and this time he had nothing to fear about evening dress.

There were three gentlemen in the room. One was away in a corner, examining, through a double eye-glass that he held in his hand, one of the engravings on the walls; the other two were standing on the hearth-rug, their backs to the fire. The taller of these was a long, thin, cadaverous man, who stooped a little; he had piercing gray eyes under shaggy eyebrows; and very white teeth which showed when he laughed his prodigious laugh; him Fitzgerald recognised at once, having seen his photograph often enough, as a Dr. Bude. The other he did not know; but he thought it very cool of both these gentlemen to take the entrance of the two ladies with so much indifference. They finished what they had been talking, or rather laughing about; then they came forward and shook hands; and then sat down as it pleased them at the table. But this indifference was unintentional; for very soon, when some other guests had come in, and everybody had sat down, and dinner had begun, it was very clear that Dr. Bude was amongst the foremost to amuse and

entertain his hostess. And it must be confessed that there was very little science talked amongst this nondescript gathering of friends and acquaintances. There was a good deal of joking, it is true, when it became known that Mary Chetwynd was to be allowed to have her big telescope; but for the most part the talk was all about public characters, and what So-and-so had said, and where So-and-so was staying. These scientific gentlemen seemed to know a good deal about the comparative merits of certain country houses as places of temporary lodgment; and their talk about fish-ponds, and cooking, and the advantages of having a well-heated hall in the middle of a house, was not so very much raised, after all, above the level of Mr. Scobell. Master Willie had more than once wondered what figure Mr. Scobell would cut in this familiar little assemblage of great people; but indeed their conversation was not of an extremely serious nature.

He sat next to Dr. Bude; and, as Dr, Bude was engaged in describing, with tre-

mendous laughter, to Mrs. Chetwynd, a conversation he had had with a gentleman whom he had met at a City dinner, Fitzgerald had plenty of leisure to study the rest of the guests, and also his hostess's niece. He had had no such opportunity before. He had scarcely ever seen Miss Chetwynd. She was mostly engaged in the East of London; when she was in the house, she was occupied in her own room. And now it seemed to him that her expression was a little more gentle, less resolute and self-sufficient, than he had fancied it was. The head was small; and beautifully shaped; and she wore her hair more tightly brushed than was the fashion of the time, so that the symmetry of the head was clearly seen. Her features were fine; her complexion somewhat pale; and now he saw that her eyes, which hitherto he had considered to be somewhat cold in their clear, direct way of looking at one, were really of a beautiful blue, with dark lashes, and could be expressive enough, whether she seemed interested in what her neighbour was saying, or was

joining in some general merriment. And when she had to submit to some raillery about the forthcoming big telescope, she did it very prettily.

"You know," she said, "the time will come when people will look back on Lord Rosse's telescope as a mere toy."

"Why, of course," said Dr. Bude, coming to her rescue. "You are quite right, Miss Chetwynd. The human race will be driven to invent not only immense telescopes, but also means of conveying themselves to some other planet—that is, when this one grows too cold for human subsistence. When the earth cools, and the process is going on now, so that humanity must flit, you may depend on it by that time science will have invented means for their removal to a more generous climate. But there must be a beginning in the way of experiment. I appeal to Professor Sims. The Royal Society should do something."

Professor Sims, who was the shorter of the two strangers whom Fitzgerald had found standing before the fire, and who was a

white-haired, rosy-faced old gentleman, with gold spectacles, answered immediately—

"No doubt, no doubt," said he. "The necessity must arise. And if you look at what science has done within the last ten years, who is to say what she may not have accomplished within the next—what shall I say?"

"'An eternity or two,' was Alfred de Musset's phrase," suggested Fitzgerald: but it instantly occurred to him that to mention even the name of a sentimentalist like Alfred de Musset among these hard-headed people was absurd. However, it did not much matter; for presently they were considering whether, when the world had got chilled down to the condition of the moon, the last traces of human occupation would be the Pyramids or the Colosseum. Some one suggested the buried cities of Mexico; and so the matter dropped.

The dinner was a plain one as compared with the banquet which Hilton Clarke had given in the Albany; and Fitzgerald observed that the majority of the gentlemen

present drank no wine, or, at most, a little claret and water. Indeed, the whole of the proceedings were somewhat abnormal; for, directly the frugal repast was over, coffee and cigarettes were produced, and the ladies remained. Then one or another of the guests would get up, and, without any formal apology, shake hands with Mrs. Chetwynd and her niece, and say "Good night!" or "Au revoir," or perhaps nothing at all, to the others, and be off.

"I must be off, too, directly," said Dr. Bude to Fitzgerald. "I have some people coming to look at a few simple experiments with the spectroscope; and I must go and see that my battery is ready. Will you come? I can show you a nine-inch telescope, since that seems to interest you. Will you come?"

"Oh, certainly; I shall be delighted," said Fitzgerald, with great eagerness. This Dr. Bude had been very kind in one or two little things he had said during dinner. He knew about the *Household Magazine*. He knew about Fitzgerald's present duties.

He seemed a friendly sort of person; and the mere invitation was a compliment coming from one so well-known.

The only doubt in Fitzgerald's mind was as to the propriety of his going away while any of the others remained. He had no lecture to deliver; nor any learned society to attend. Moreover, there did not seem much chance of his explaining the circumstances to Mrs. Chetwynd; for the pretty old lady—who seemed so pleased that all these people should drop in to chat with her for an hour—was listening intently to the gentleman on her left; and he was describing the very remarkable high jinks he had observed in a great person's house immediately after dinner—the ladies, indeed, taking part in them; and he was warmly defending these on hygienic principles: although hoping that nothing about them would get into the papers, through some unfortunate accident happening. However, Dr. Bude got him out of the dilemma; for he rose and said—

"Good night, Mrs. Chetwynd. I must

be off to get my things ready; and I am going to take Mr. Fitzgerald with me, to show him what a nine-inch telescope is like."

He went out of the room without saying good-bye to anybody else, Fitzgerald following; and the latter, in a minute or so, found himself for the first time in his life, in a private Hansom—a vehicle which went so smoothly and so rapidly that he seemed to be going through the air on wings.

Dr. Bude's house was in the Brompton Road—a rather shabby-looking building outside, but spacious within. Fitzgerald followed his host up to the first floor, the back part of which consisted of an apartment that seemed partly an observatory, partly a library, and partly a laboratory. An assistant was at the moment arranging some glass tubes, and two spectroscopes, on a table; and Dr. Bude, throwing off his coat, though the dusky room was far from being over warm, proceeded to test the various wires and other apparatus, all of which were a profound mystery to his guest.

"I suppose you see a great deal of Miss Chetwynd?" he said: and at the same moment the electric light flashed into a tube, causing Fitzgerald's eyes to jump.

"Oh no, very little."

"She is a very remarkable woman," said the other, with decision: though, indeed, he was now on his knees on the floor, examining the battery. "She might do something, that girl. She has a fine brain—acute and penetrating. But she has had no training, that is the mischief of it. She should have been brought up on mathematics. But, after all, the number of women who have done anything in pure science is very small. I think she is throwing herself away on this education of the poorest classes—that is vestrymen's work; though perhaps I should not say so; for I don't know precisely what she is at."

Then he rose; and clapped his hands together, to get rid of the dust.

"I was amused," he said, with a laugh. "She asked me what would be the most effectual way of teaching these ignorant

people the perniciousness of breathing foul air. You know how they huddle together for warmth; and cover the children over with such bed-clothes as they have got. I think she was going to deliver a lecture on 'Fresh Air and Pure Water' somewhere or other——"

"Yes, I know she has done that," said Fitzgerald, as the tall, lean man turned towards the table again, and continued his preparations.

"Well, she very naturally concluded that tumbling gases of different weights into jars, or extinguishing tapers, would not be impressive enough; so I told her to get a sparrow, to tie its feet down to a bit of board; and to put over it a bell-jar before these people, and ask them to watch what will happen to the bird merely through its breathing its own breath. Of course the little creature becomes asphyxiated, staggers and falls, and ultimately dies. Doubtless, I told her, the most effective way of exhibiting the experiment would be to raise the bell-jar during the process of asphyxiation, and

show the reviving effect of the fresh air; then to close it again until death preached its moral. She said she would do that. She was quite delighted. What lesson could be more obvious?——"

But at this moment there was a sound of footsteps on the stairs; and the Doctor had to whip on his coat, and go and receive two or three young people who now entered. Fitzgerald did not like that story about the sparrow. Miss Chetwynd was no Lesbia, clearly. And although the conscience of a wild-fowl shooter is apt to be hard; and although he knew quite well that the asphyxiation of a sparrow or even twenty dozen sparrows was scarcely to be considered if it induced a certain number of human beings to treat their children more humanely —still—still—

The doctor came back.

"I have a sort of class," he explained to Fitzgerald, "who come and practise a little and ask questions, before the vulgar world arrives to be amused. I hope it won't be tedious for you. If you prefer it, my assist-

ant will arrange the telescope for you; the night is beautifully clear——"

"Oh no, not at all. Was Miss Chetwynd's experiment successful?"

"Why I forgot to finish my story! She got the sparrow, and the string, and the board, and the bell-jar, all complete; and she thought, to make sure, she would make her first trial before her aunt in the drawing-room. And it was all quite successful until the first stagger of the little creature; then she hesitated; then she shook her head. Off came the bell-jar at once; she opened the window; and cut the string; and out went Jack Sparrow. Nothing would induce her to repeat the experiment."

"I should not have thought she was so sentimental," said Fitzgerald.

"Ah, that's just it," said the Doctor, as he heated a bit of copper-wire at a gas jet. "A woman never ceases to be a woman, whatever she is at. Her reason fails her when she is confronted by suffering; her heart overmasters her head. But in pure science that girl might have done something,

if she had had proper training. She has a fine quality of brain. I can tell how much people know by their questions. Her questions are always sharp and to the point. When she comes here she knows precisely what she wants——"

The good Doctor seemed to like talking about Mary Chetwynd; but on this occasion he was checked by the appearance of the young lady herself, who arrived quite alone. She seemed surprised to find Fitzgerald there, though she said nothing beyond an ordinary greeting. She at once went forward to the table; and the Doctor was particular in finding her a chair, though the others who were now arriving were allowed to stand about anyhow.

What followed was quite unintelligible to Fitzgerald, for at that time the theory of spectroscopy was much less familiar to the public than it is nowadays, when every second schoolgirl has a spectroscope in her pocket. But if the meaning of the experiments was dark to him, the manners of the students were interesting enough; and he could

readily distinguish between the serious ones, who were mostly silent, or only asking a question now and again, and the flippant ones, who exclaimed with terror at the ghastly appearance of each other's faces when a little common salt was ignited at a Bunsen burner, and who cried, "Oh, how sweetly lovely!" when a trifle of chloride of lithium spread abroad a rose-red flame. But perhaps it was the demeanour of Mary Chetwynd that most engaged his attention; and he could see that her questions were the most promptly answered, and that to her most of the explanations were addressed. Fitzgerald, standing apart by the mantelpiece, and observing, out of that motley group, only these two—the long, lean, pale-faced teacher, and the young lady student, who sat in a chair there, following his words with a serious attention—began to dream dreams. Why should not these two cold intelligences go through the world together, like twin stars sailing through the night? He was considerably her elder, to be sure; but the girl who was sitting there, with the fine, serious, thoughtful face, was

more likely to think of his high reputation than of his years. What a strange love-making it would be! Moonlit walks with disquisitions on the spectrum of Sirius. The Bunsen burner looked ghostly enough; but he knew that Don Fierna and the elves would fly away from it. He could scarcely help laughing when he thought of these two tall persons standing on each side of the little stream, and holding each other's hand. What would the phrase be? "Over HO_2 in rapid motion?" And then he thought of Kitty. Kitty did not know, probably, that water consisted of hydrogen and oxygen; but Kitty knew how to make love. He sent her a kiss in imagination. By this time of the night she would be at home—away up there on the hill, opposite Shandon Bells.

These speculations about the possible future of Dr. Bude and Miss Mary Chetwynd were somewhat rudely dispelled by the entrance of a stout and comely dame in rustling black silk, who cheerfully greeted the various pupils, and kissed Miss Chetwynd very affectionately, and then, addressing the lecturer

as "My dear," asked him for certain keys. The next minute Fitzgerald was introduced to this buxom and good-humoured-looking lady, who turned out to be Mrs. Bude; so that he had to bid good-bye to that horoscope of the scientific lovers. Mrs. Bude did not remain long; she was evidently in a hurry; Fitzgerald returned to the contemplative study of the heads before him, as these were illumined from time to time by the various colours of different metals.

Something else was going forward, however, on this first floor. The drawing-room, with which this observatory was connected, had been brilliantly lit up; and now steps could be heard on the stairs outside, and the names of guests being announced as they reached the door. Then some of these began to stroll from the drawing-room into the observatory; and very soon the Doctor was busy enough, with greeting these new-comers, and with trying to show them something they could understand. His patience and good-humour seemed to Fitzgerald admirable. "Oh, what a lovely green!" "Oh, how

sweetly pretty!" "Must I shut one eye to look through?" "Doctor, why should one line be so much clearer than the others?" "And so you know that all these things are in the sun?" "Do show my husband that pretty green colour again!" The good Doctor appeared to be talking to all these ladies and gentlemen at once; sometimes frankly laughing at their questions; and not at all displeased that he should be addressed as if he were the conductor of a show. Fitzgerald could perceive that Miss Chetwynd was calmly regarding the new-comers; once or twice he caught her smiling to herself.

Amid the crowd of people, who kept strolling in from the large and well-lit drawing-room to the small and dusty laboratory, and strolling back again, there was one lady who very much interested him, partly because she was remarkably pretty, and partly because of a chance exclamation of hers that he overheard. The Doctor was explaining to a little group of people the source of colour in objects —the absorption or reflection of the different rays of light, and so forth; and in illustration

he brought a little bunch of scarlet geraniums in a glass; turned off the light; then ignited some common salt at the Bunsen burner, producing a powerful yellow flame. Of course the geraniums became of a ghastly gray; and this pretty lady, perhaps not quite understanding that nothing had happened to them, exclaimed to herself "Poor things!" Fitzgerald liked her for that. She seemed to recognise some principle of life in the flowers, as though they were associated with humanity somehow; and although there might have been no profound intention in her remark; and although, when the gas was lit again, the geraniums were found to be quite as scarlet as ever, nevertheless Fitzgerald was convinced that she must be a nice sort of woman. Imagine, then, his surprise when, later in the evening—the experiments being all over, and he himself, doubtful whether he ought to remain, and yet anxious to send some account of so brilliant an assemblage to Kitty, rather keeping himself in the background—he found himself dragged from his obscurity by the diligent Doctor, and forthwith introduced to

this very lady, and directed to take her downstairs to supper. Not only that; but the name she bore was also that of a distinguished Academician. Was it possible, he asked himself, as he conducted her downstairs, that she should be the wife of the great painter? He determined to find out; here, indeed, would be something to talk over with John Ross.

Well, he got her a place at the long table; and timidly asked her what she would take —a sandwich, perhaps?

"I am not so young as I look," said this pretty, English-looking woman, with the large girlish gray eyes. "I am the mother of three children; and at my time of life I know better than to destroy myself with sandwiches. No—anything else you can get."

She was an amazingly frank person; and very pleasant in her speech and her laugh. When he had got her some cold turkey, and some bread, and a glass of claret, he ventured to ask her, after some vague reference to something on the walls, whether she was very fond of pictures.

"I admire my husband's, of course," she said.

Then he knew he was right.

"Oh, of course," said he, with greater confidence. "Every one does that. I suppose, now," he added, rather hesitatingly, "your husband has become so accustomed to his distinguished position—I mean, so familiar with his place in the Academy—that he couldn't quite realise the anxiety of the outside men, of those who are not well-known, about the fate of their pictures? That would not interest him much, would it? I mean it would not be possible to induce him to interest himself in—in helping, for example—an artist who was not known——"

This was not at all satisfactory, especially as she seemed to imagine he was pleading for himself.

"Are you an artist?" she asked, at length, with a frank look.

"Oh no."

"Well, then, to tell you truth," said she, "I don't know what anxiety the outsiders may feel; but it isn't half of the anxiety they

cause me. I know when my husband is on the Hanging Committee it thoroughly breaks him down for three weeks after. It is by far the hardest work of the year for him. And then the thanks!—to be abused by the public, and accused of envy by the outsiders. Envy, indeed! I wonder who it is that my husband needs envy!"

"Why, not any one!" said Fitzgerald, warmly; for he liked the human nature, the frank sincerity, of this woman.

"I wish they'd let the outsiders come in and hang their own pictures for themselves!" she said, with a laugh. "I suppose they'd all quite agree. I wish they would paint better, and grumble less."

"Oh, but the outsider I was thinking of is not like that," said Fitzgerald, pleasantly, for he was not in the least offended by her humorous petulance. "He paints very well; and does not grumble at all. He is quite content. Only, I thought if your husband would be so kind as merely to remember his name, and look at his work when it is sent in——"

"But my husband was on the Council last year; so he won't be again for some time—thank goodness!"

"So there is no use in my asking you to intercede?"

"No; not even if you offer to bribe me with sandwiches. But," she added, looking up at him for a moment, "what is your friend's name?"

"John Ross."

"That is not a difficult name to remember. John Ross. Why are you interested in him—you are not Scotch?"

"He is a neighbour of mine; and—and he does good work, I think—and ought to be better known."

"Landscape or figures?"

"Landscape."

"I guessed as much. The Scotchmen take to landscape because they can't draw. Now take me back, please, for I must fetch my husband and get home; and I shan't forget your friend's name; for I never had sandwiches offered me as a bribe before."

He escorted her upstairs again; and then

seized the first opportunity of slipping away. In the hall he found he had been preceded by Miss Chetwynd, who, quite alone, was tying something round her neck, the night being cold. He hesitated for a second, not quite knowing what was proper for him to do; and then, at a venture, he went forward and said—

"Miss Chetwynd, can I get your carriage for you?"

"No, thank you," she said, as he thought, a trifle ungraciously and stiffly. "My cab is outside. I know the man."

The servant opened the hall-door, and she passed out; Fitzgerald lingering for a moment under pretence of buttoning his overcoat. Her refusal to allow him to be of this slight service had been, as he considered, somewhat too explicit. What had he done? Or was she unaware that her manner was, at times, a little too decided and cold and repellent?

It mattered not to him. He walked away through the chill dark night to the vacant courtyard and the empty room, thinking what a memorable and wonderful evening that had

been for him. Perhaps never such another would happen to him; for when again was he likely to meet a great man of science to carry him off, on the friendly inspiration of the moment, and introduce him to such a gathering? And indeed the spectacle had moved him to neither emulation nor regret. It was not the way of life he would choose, if it were open to him. He had his own dreams and ambitions; his own notions of what was beautiful and worth having in the world; and if Mary Chetwynd had any vague fancy that he wished to gain an entrance into distinguished or fashionable society, either through a scientific doorway or through any other, she was quite mistaken. But more probably she had not even given a thought to the matter; and he was content.

CHAPTER V.

A MORNING WALK AND OTHER MATTERS.

[*N.B.*—This chapter may very conveniently be passed over by those who wish to get on with "the story;" for it contains little beyond a description of one or two influences which were at this time in a measure forming the character of this young man, and so far shaping the work of his after-life.]

NEXT morning Fitzgerald had promised to go for a walk with his Scotch neighbour, who had a theory that neither could he paint, nor his companion write, properly, unless they went forth from time to time to see what the outside world was looking like. Moreover, these periodical excursions were undertaken without any regard to the weather. John Ross used to say that anybody could admire the chromo-lithograph aspects of nature; but

that it wanted training and affectionate care and watchfulness to observe the beautifulness of gray days and wet roads and wintry skies. Fitzgerald, of course, was nothing loth. He had brought his shooting boots and gaiters with him from Ireland, and he had a serviceable waterproof; he was just as ready as Ross to go splashing away through the mud to Kew, to see what the wilderness part of the Gardens (a favourite haunt of theirs, and but little known to the public) was like in driving rain, or in feathery snow, or in clear hard frost when the red berries shone among the green. It was wonderful how interesting the world had become to him. He no longer confined his attention, when out walking, to the animals and birds he might observe (with rapid calculations as to whether they were within shot or without); now, if there was nothing else to be seen, the gradation of light on the puddles of a rainy road he found to be quite worth looking at. Nothing had been taken away from the world; but a great deal added. It was of itself something that he had learnt not even to despise the com-

monplace gray days that in the winter so frequently hung over Chelsea.

But he had an added interest in these various perambulations of which his companion knew nothing—he was continually on the outlook for some pretty little cottage, some quaint river-side house, that would meet with the approval of Kitty's black eyes when the great time came. This imaginary nest-building was a most fascinating kind of occupation. Sometimes he would go away by himself and ramble through all sorts of strange suburban places, in the hope of meeting with something so very quaint and picturesque and secluded that even Kitty—who rather avoided that subject, and would not express any preference for town or country—might have her curiosity aroused. So far the most engaging place he had seen was a small, odd-looking house in Grosvenor Road, fronting the river. It appeared to have been an old-fashioned tavern at one time; but now it was a little private dwelling, with odd inequalities about the windows and gables, and very prettily painted in white and green.

Were not these the very windows for Kitty to adorn with trailing plants and flower-boxes? Again and again, at a convenient distance, he stood and watched the house; and tried to imagine Kitty actually there, reaching up her arms to put a branch so, or so; perhaps singing the while; perhaps whistling to the blackbird in the cage. There was the slight drawback, it is true, that the house was not to be let; but then he and Kitty had still a long time of waiting before them, and who knew what might not happen in that interval? Besides, where there was one little habitation that seemed so charming there might be others; and so, whatever subject John Ross might be descanting on in his fiery-headed fashion, and however attentively Fitzgerald might be listening, there was nothing to prevent the eyes of the latter from wandering from cottage to cottage, from villa to villa, from garden to garden, in a sort of vague mechanical quest for a pretty resting-place for Kitty.

But this particular morning was clear and cold and fine—an excellent morning for

walking; and of course Fitzgerald had a great deal to tell about his experiences of the previous night, and his proposal to take up some of his companion's pictures to show to Mrs. Chetwynd.

"You see, if she were to take two or three of them, it might be a great advantage to you," observed Fitzgerald.

"It would be a very distinct and solid advantage," said the red-bearded gentleman with a laugh.

"Oh, but I mean apart from the money. Mrs. Chetwynd knows some of the Academicians; and if your pictures were seen by them at her house, don't you see, it might do you good. Oh, that reminds me. I met the wife of an Academician last night. I shan't tell you her name, for she said something about Scotch artists that you won't like."

"What was it?"

"She said they took to landscape because they couldn't draw."

No doubt Fitzgerald repeated this with the malicious intention of making his companion angry; and, indeed, for a moment

John Ross stood stock still; but then again he laughed good-naturedly and continued his walking.

"Ay, I'm thinking her husband maun be one o' the story-tellers."

"Story-tellers?"

"There's plenty of them among the English artists—men who ought to belong to your business, no' to mine. Pent is what they know least about; but they can tell a pretty story—out o' a book. That is something, after all. If they know little about colour, at least they can help the ignorant public to a bit of sentiment or the like. But there's one thing the Scotch have done, my lad; and that again and again; they have had to bring both English literature and art back to nature. It was when people were given over to the wretched artifeecialities of the Pope school that Allan Ramsay's 'Gentle Shepherd' and Thomson's 'Seasons' got them back out of that hothouse to look at real nature and human nature——"

"Pope? Is that what you think of Pope?"

said his companion, eagerly; for he had his own grudge on that score.

"Pope?" repeated John Ross. "I consider——"

But as it turned out there was to be no conjoint dancing on a dead man's grave; for at this moment Ross's attention was drawn to two young ladies who were crossing the Hammersmith Road in front of them.

"Heaven save us!" he exclaimed. "Did ever ye see the like o' that?"

"Their waists, do you mean?" his companion said; for indeed the two young ladies, probably sisters, for they were dressed precisely alike, had waists of such small dimensions that more than one person had turned and stared at them.

"The ignorant craytures," said John Ross, half angrily, "to think that men admire a spectacle like that! Have they no common sense?"

"They must have pretty good muscles, at all events, to have pulled themselves in like that," his companion said.

"But, bless me, common sense should tell

a young lass that it's the foolishest thing in the world for her to remind people that she has an internal economy at all! She ought to have none, in your imagination. She ought to be all spirit and poetry; just an amiable young life looking out on the world with sweetness and innocence, and a wish to be friendly. But when ye see a waist like that, confound it, ye're made to ask yourself where the mischief she has put her liver!"

John Ross seemed to resent the appearance of these young ladies, as if he had sustained some personal injury.

"I say that anything that suggests that a young lass has a spine, or a liver, or anything of the kind, is a most intolerable nuisance," said Ross, angrily. "And to deform one of the most beautiful things in the world, too—that is the figure of a young woman from the shoulders to the waist. Look at that; do you know what that is?"

He took out his sketch-book, and made a few rapid lines on one of the blank pages.

"A vase, I suppose."

"That is the Canopian vase; that has

always been understood to have been imitated from the female figure. But look what it would be if the base were to be narrowed like the waist of one of those girls. Look; where is your proportion now? What kind of a vase is that?"

"Well, if you only drew the lines down a little bit farther, it would be like one of the Pompeian earthen jars——"

"Ay, the jars they stuck into the ground. Poor craytures, that's just what they lasses there are working for. I wonder if they havena got a mother to skelp them."

However, the disappearance of the young ladies round a corner removed the cause of his grumbling; and very soon he had quite recovered his equanimity. For now the air was growing clearer; the roads wider; the gardens between the houses were larger; and the sunlight was making the wintry trees and bushes look quite cheerful.

"Look at that, now," Ross said, coming to a sudden halt before some tall maples, the branches of which, reaching away into the blue, were of the most brilliant gold where the

bark had peeled off. "Can you get anything stronger in colour than that in the middle of summer? Look how fine the blue is above."

"Yes, but it would look top-heavy in a picture, wouldn't it?"

"No, no, my lad; there you're mistaken. Sunlight always comes out; no fear of yellow not holding its own. If you were painting that, you would find the blue go as far back as ever ye wanted it. I think if I were a king, that's what I would have in my dining-chamber—solid gold up to about the height of your head; and then above that all a pale blue, and the roof a pale blue, so that you could let your eyes go away a great distance when you lifted them from the table. And then, in case the solid gold of the wall would make you feel as if you were in a metal case I would have a procession of figures, all in pure scarlet, perhaps mediæval figures, with trellis-work, or better still, a Greek procession——"

"You would have plenty of colour, then," said Fitzgerald, laughing. "Gold, scarlet, and pale blue."

"The three primaries; why not?"

But as there was not much apparent chance of either of these two having to study this matter practically, it was abandoned; and very soon they found themselves in the wilderness lying between the formal part of Kew Gardens and the river. Here it was a great delight to Fitzgerald to find himself so completely removed from all the surroundings of town life—watching the squirrels and the birds and what not, while his companion now and again took jottings of what he called the anatomy of the different kinds of trees. The sunlight was quite clear here; and there was plenty of rich colour among the dark green firs and the browns and reds of withered leaves, and the glowing scarlet of the berries that still remained on the bushes. Then they walked back to the bridge; and for the first time since he had left Inisheen, Fitzgerald got into a boat, and enjoyed the new sensation of managing a pair of sculls, while Ross sat in the stern, and seemed pleased that the pull against the heavy current was just about as much as Master

Willie wanted. And then they had a snack of luncheon at the nearest hotel; and then they set out to walk back to London, with the chill gray dusk of the afternoon slowly settling down.

But when they did get back to the big hollow-sounding studio, Fitzgerald discovered that he had a very difficult task before him. Whether it was that John Ross was over fond of these children of his brain and skill, and disliked parting with them, or whether it was that he detested the pecuniary side of his profession altogether, Fitzgerald found that he could get no help from him in the selection of the pictures or sketches he wished to take to Mrs. Chetwynd.

"How can I tell what any one's fancy may be?" said he, almost surlily. "Most likely she would rather have a picture of a white lap-dog with a bit of pink ribbon round its neck."

"Well, we will see," remarked Fitzgerald, who had at length chosen out half-a-dozen canvases, and was tying them together. "And now I must have a cab—for the first

time since I came to London; but I expect you to pay that, Ross, if I sell any of your pictures. That will be my commission."

Moreover, he was himself a little anxious. As the Hansom (which was not quite so smooth-going as that of Dr. Bude) carried him up to Hyde Park Gardens he began to suspect that some of Ross's disinclination had probably arisen from the fear that his work might be misunderstood and subjected to the ignominy of refusal. That was bad enough at the Academy; but in the case of the Academy, there was also the consoling possibility that it was want of space which was the practical cause of rejection. Mr. Ross was a proud man in his way; little as he was disposed to over-rate the value of his work. And Fitzgerald, when he was actually carrying these canvases upstairs, began to think that he had assumed a very serious responsibility.

There is no doubt that this kind old lady, who examined these landscapes as well as she could with the aid of a large magnifying-

glass, would at once, in her good-humoured way, have purchased some of them, or perhaps even the whole of them; but this he would not hear of. It was not altogether as a favour to an unknown artist that he wished to dispose of them, he gently reminded her: perhaps if one or two of her friends saw these studies they would be very glad to get them. In any case he would rather have her wait for their opinion.

"Oh, very well," said she, good-naturedly. "And the price?"

Fitzgerald flushed uneasily.

"I could not get my friend to say exactly. Perhaps—perhaps if you were to ask Mr. Sydenham to value them —— Being an Academician he ought to know."

"Oh, but that would never do. So much depends on circumstances. So much depends on your friend's own valuation. Have you no guess?"

"Well," said Fitzgerald, desperately, "I may as well make a guess; for Mr. Ross won't help me. I think they are worth more—but he is not known, of course—and

I don't think £20 each would be too much——"

"Would it be too little?" said the little old lady, with a charming frankness. "For who knows what fancy some of our friends may take for them?"

"If you would not mind asking Mr. Sydenham," he again suggested.

"Well, I will," she said. "On that basis, that if we take them at £20 each your friend won't be greatly dissatisfied."

"I think he will be very much pleased. Only," he added, with some hesitation, "if I might ask another favour, it would be that, supposing Mr. Sydenham does not come here this evening, or very soon, indeed, you might not be too long in arriving at some decision. The fact is, I would not like Mr. Ross to be thinking that his studies were waiting out on approval, as it were——"

"I understand perfectly," said the good old lady, "and there will be no delay, I promise you."

That night Fitzgerald was in Ross's studio. Both were smoking and talking;

but Ross had his sketch-book on his knee, and also handy a box of water-colours. He was illustrating a favourite theory of his that, after such a walk as they had had that morning, the memory recalls most clearly, if not exclusively, such objects as were lit up by the sunlight; and he was jotting down memoranda of things he could remember—the brass knob on a house door, the zinc roof of a conservatory, a red cart-wheel against a gray wall, and so forth, and so forth—in an aimless sort of way, and mainly for amusement.

"There's somebody going up your stair," he said.

Fitzgerald went out and called "Who's there?"

"A letter for Mr. Fitzgerald," said a voice from above.

"All right. Bring it here. Do you want an answer?"

"No, sir," said the lad, "I believe not, sir. Good night, sir."

"Good night."

Fitzgerald hesitated. He knew the letter

was from Mrs. Chetwynd, for the address was in Miss Chetwynd's handwriting; and he would gladly, for the sake of preparation, have opened it in his own room. But here was Ross calling from within to know what was the matter; and so he boldly resolved to enter and open the letter before him, whatever the decision might be.

"DEAR MR. FITZGERALD,"—this was what Miss Chetwynd's clear, beautiful, precise handwriting said, "My aunt says you seemed anxious to know as soon as possible the fate of your friend's sketches; and desires me to send you this note to-night. They have been much admired, I believe. Mr. Sydenham took one; Dr. Bude another; and my aunt keeps the remaining four; and I am asked to enclose this cheque for £120, as she thinks that was about what you suggested.

"Yours faithfully,

"MARY CHETWYND."

"Now isn't that a kind old lady?" said Fitzgerald. "Fancy her taking the trouble

to send a message at this time of night. Well, what do you say, Ross? Is it enough? You know I had nothing to guide me. Is it enough?"

John Ross was holding the letter in his hand, and staring at it absently.

"I wonder which one he took. I would give anything just to find that out," said he, apparently to himself.

Fitzgerald took the letter from him, and glanced at it again.

"Why, of course," said he. "I did not notice it. That was the Academician himself who took one. I shall find out to-morrow which one he bought. But I want to know whether the money is sufficient."

"Plenty, plenty. Enough and to spare."

"Then I will trouble you for eighteenpence, that I paid for the cab."

"We'll make a better job of it than that, my lad," said he, coming to the money question at last, and shoving the cheque across the small table. "Ye'll just take a clear half o' that; and ye'll take a holiday, and go away over to Ireland, and see the

young lass that ye're aye thinking about, though ye will not say so; and cheer her up. That's sensible."

Fitzgerald gave a slight backward touch to the cheque.

"No, thank you," said he (his face a little red). "I'm not in want of money, thank you, all the same. What I am in want of," he added, after a second, and with his eyes grown distant, "is some more certain employment. Then I would go back to Ireland, gladly enough, for a day or two. But this literary business is so difficult."

"Is it worse than pentin'?" the other demanded. "When have I had as much money as that at one time? Never in all my life! And sooner or later ye'll just drop on your feet like that; and not a mere chance, such as that is; but a settled thing; a permanency; and then I know fine what will happen. 'Whistle and I'll come to ye, my lad!' and it's a' smiles, and white satin, and nervousness, and the laughing and joking of your friends; and if ye havena a jar o' good Scotch whisky for that day, then my name's not John Ross!"

"In the meantime," said Fitzgerald, looking a bit more cheerful, "I propose——"

"In the meantime, are you going to take the money?" said Ross, in his downright way. "Why not? I could not have got as much for them myself. And I have plenty to go on with."

"No," said Fitzgerald, hastily, "but I'll tell you what you can do, if you like. Next Saturday Mrs. Chetwynd is going down to Hastings until the Monday. Now on the Saturday we shall have a grand holiday, and you shall pay for everything, from the rising of the sun till the going down of the same—in fact, until we get back here."

"Most certainly—most certainly; but where are ye for going this time?"

"Down the Thames—all about the docks and wharves. I have not smelt tar, or stumbled over a rope, or had a chat with a captain, since I left the south of Ireland. And won't you see colour there, if the day is fine—the river, the barges, the ruddy sails——"

"It's done with ye," said Ross, decisively.

"It's done with ye. And we'll get our dinner somewhere—if possible, in a place overlooking the river. We will find out some old-fashioned tavern—propped up on piles, maybe—with a buxom landlady in the bar, among the schiedam bottles and the silver—and the landlord coming in to us with a bottle o' Madeira forty years old—and sitting down, of course, and having a crack wi' us. And then—but can ye keep a secret?"

"What is it?"

"Then, I'm thinking, my lad, when that bottle's opened, and mum's the word except for guesses; I'm thinking, without any breach of secrecy on your part, and without any impudence on mine; what do ye say, then, if, when that bottle was opened, we were to drink a glass '*To the lass that's over the water?*'"

CHAPTER VI.

AN APPARITION.

But it was not fated that Fitzgerald should go to the docks; the docks, or at least a representative of them, came to him. The following day, early in the afternoon, he was working away as industriously as usual, as industriously as if he had had no experience of the coyness or indifference of London publishers and editors. He was deeply intent on what he was about; and so, when he heard outside the preliminary tinkling of a banjo, and made sure he was about to be serenaded by a nigger-minstrel, he rose with much angry impatience and went to the door, not quite sure whether the best way to get rid of the man was to throw something to him, or to throw something at him.

When, however, he went outside, a most extraordinary scene was presented to him in

the courtyard below. It was raining hard, to begin with. The nigger-minstrel seemed to be very drunk, and very merry; and he was not alone; for, backing from him, apparently in abject terror, was a singular-looking creature, whose face Fitzgerald could not see, but who wore a pilot-jacket much too big for him and a huge sou'-wester, and carried a large bundle slung over his shoulder by means of a stick. The farther that this little man and the big sou'-wester retreated—his gestures indicating a cowering fear—the nearer came this capering soot-faced idiot in the dress-coat, white breeches, and vast pink collar, singing snatches of doggerel, or begging for money with a sort of drunken facetiousness.

"Now, Paddy, a sixpence won't hurt ye—not a sixpence for the poor musician? A drop o' dog's-nose, Paddy—twopennorth o' gin, then, old man——"

Then he twanged his banjo again, and capered and skipped, clearly enjoying the obvious fright of his victim.

"Where's your shillelagh, Paddy? Och,

but ye're the broth of a boy. Not two-pennorth o' gin for the poor musician, Paddy?"

But the little man had retreated until he had reached the foot of the stairs; and could back no farther. In his desperation he shouted—

"Away wid ye! Away wid ye!"—and Fitzgerald suddenly fancied that the voice was familiar to him.

The nigger-minstrel was not to be balked of his drunken fun. He skipped and danced round his victim, poking at his face with his banjo. Then something desperate happened, all at once. The little man dropped his bundle, and, with the stick that had supported it in his hand, seemed to jump at his enemy like a wild-cat.

"Blood alive, but I'll bate your head in!" he yelled; and the next moment there was a battering of blows—that seemed all the more terrible, because most of them fell on the banjo with which the nigger was vainly defending himself. Fitzgerald thought it was high time to interfere.

"Here, you!" he called from the top of the stairs. "What are you doing there?"

The scrimmage ceased for a second as the little man looked up; then he uttered a slight cry. In three bounds he was up the stairs.

"Oh, Masther Willie, 'tis yoursilf at last!" he cried. "Glory be to God! Glory be to God, 'tis yoursilf at last, Masther Willie——"

But in his agitation Andy the Hopper could not get rid of his alarm; and a frightened glance told him that his enemy was also coming up the stairs.

"Away wid ye! Away wid ye, ye bligard! Oh, Masther Willie, what kind of a man is that? Sure I thought he was the divil!"

"Did you never see a nigger-minstrel before?" said Fitzgerald, laughing; but keeping an eye on the musician. "Well, if he isn't the divil, Andy, you'll have the divil to pay; for you've broken his banjo."

"And sarve the bligard right—the dirthy bligard!" said Andy, who was much braver now, with Master Willie in front of him. "Sure I tould him I'd bate him, and I did—the bligard!"

But the minstrel was no longer facetious; nor was he irate either. He was morose. He contemplated the smashed strings of the banjo with a gloomy air. Then he tried to get Fitzgerald to believe that this savage Paddy had attacked him; and when Fitzgerald remarked that he had seen the affair from the beginning, the complaint dwindled down into a lachrymose petition for some compensation. Would the gentleman look at what had been done to his hat and his wig? Would the kind gentleman give a poor man a drop o' something to drink, to keep out the rheumatics? At last he went away, pacified with a shilling; but after Fitzgerald and his new companion had gone inside and shut the door, they heard an extraordinary burst of shrill laughter in the courtyard below, as if the departing minstrel had just remembered again the joke he had played off on the frightened Paddy.

"Well, Andy, sit down and tell me what has brought you to London."

But Andy was quite bewildered. His delight at seeing the young master again;

the fright of his encounter with the black creature; the strangeness of this big, bare apartment — these seemed to deprive him of speech. And then he uttered an exclamation:

"Oh, mother o' Moses, if the bligard hasn't taken my bag!"

"What bag, Andy?"

"The bag wid the shnipes, and the tale, and the hares. Sure the sight of your face, Masther Willie, has dhrew away my sinses——"

"You must have left it down below—go and see."

Andy quickly moved to the door; and then as suddenly paused.

"Sure, Masther Willie, axin' your pardon, would ye come too?"

Fitzgerald burst out laughing; but he went to the top of the stairs.

"The fellow's gone, Andy; you need not be afraid. And so is your bag, I imagine."

But to Andy's great delight, he found the bag, which had been kicked past the corner of the building during the scuffle, and so had

escaped observation when they were retiring from the scene of the fight. And a very heavy bag it was — this waterproof sack which Andy the Hopper, having removed his sou'-wester and his big pilot-jacket, proceeded to open. There were snipe, and teal, and golden plover, and what not, and there were three splendid plump brown hares. It seemed quite natural to see this little red-haired leprechaun-looking Andy on his knees sorting out the game.

"And where did all these come from, Andy?"

"Sure, some from the bog; and some from the mountain," answered Andy, imperturbably.

"And who shot them?"

"Is it who shot them? Who would be afther shooting them but mesilf, your honour?"

"And who gave you leave to shoot the mountain?"

"Lave?" said Andy, looking up with a quite honest stare of the small clear blue eyes. "There's no one'd be axing for lave

to shoot a shnipe or a hare for yer honour. Yerra, who'd be axing for lave?"

"Oh, Andy, Andy!" said Fitzgerald. "What have you been after?"

For now, indeed, as Andy, with a little hesitation, drew out a brace of fine-plumaged pheasants, and stroked their feathers down, and smoothed out their long tails, even Andy seemed a little bit self-conscious.

"Oh, Andy, what have you been up to?"

"Thrue for you, sir," said Andy, looking very matter-of-fact, "it isn't often thim kind o' birds comes about the mountain——"

"The mountain! Do you mean to say you shot these pheasants up the mountain?"

"It isn't often them kind o' birds comes about the mountain——" said Andy, vaguely.

"You stole them out of Lord Kinsale's coverts, I know you did."

"Auh! To hear the like o' that now! Shtalin'! Was I ever afther shtalin' when I was out wid you, Masther Willie, on both bog and mountain, many's and many's the time? They're a foine brace o' birds, yer honour."

There was no denying that, at all events;

and Andy avoided further discussion, or confession, by proceeding to carry the game to the adjacent table, where he laid out the beautifully-plumaged birds brace by brace, just as he used to do on the kitchen-dresser at Inisheen, after Master Willie and he had come back from the mountain. And then he was invited to come and sit by the fire and light his pipe; the while the young master went and got a pint bottle of ale and a tumbler for him. It was not the first time that these two had had a chat together.

It appeared, then, from Andy's narrative, that a gentleman of the name of Tim Sullivan, who had married Andy's cousin Bridget, had laid under some obligation the captain of a trading-smack called the *Molly Bawn*, who, in turn, had offered in return to Mr. Sullivan a free passage to London—or, at least, to Limehouse—whenever he chose to make the trip. This Mr. Sullivan seemed to be a person of wide and ambitious views; for, though he could not avail himself of this offer to see the world—owing to his wife being ill, and he having to look after the

pigs—he did not wish to have it thrown away; and so he had come to Andy the Hopper and put the chance before him.

"He says to me, 'Andy, would ye like to see London now?' 'Divil a bit,' says I, 'but it's Masther Willie I'd like to see.' 'Sure,' says he, ''tis the great chance for ye. For what can a gintleman do in London without a sarvint?' says he. 'Baithershin,' says I. 'Whose sarvint?' 'Whose?' says he. 'Who but Mr. Fitzgerald?' 'Begor,' says I, 'but 'tis the divil's own cleverness ye've got, Tim Sullivan! for who'd have thought of that now?'"

"But you don't mean to say you've come all the way from Inisheen, Andy, to try your luck in London as a man-servant?"

"Well, Masther Willie," said Andy, scratching his red hair with much perplexity, "not in a gineral kind of way; but if it was yoursilf, sorr——"

Fitzgerald glanced round the apartment.

"Does this look as if I needed a man-servant, Andy?"

Now there is very little doubt that Andy

the Hopper had been possessed with the conviction that Master Willie, having gone away to make his fortune, would be living in grand style; but his notions of grandeur were vague; and in any case, was this all of the house that belonged to the young master? Fitzgerald had gently to explain to him that these visions that Mr. Sullivan had awakened were not practical; and he was very much pleased to hear that Andy could get a free passage back in about ten days' time, and also that one of the hands on board the smack had got him a lodgment at Limehouse. Nor was Andy so greatly disappointed. He had always been accustomed to take Master Willie's advice as something that there was no contesting; and he quickly fell in with the notion that, now he was here, the best thing he could do was to see as much of London as he could, that he might be a great person when he got back to Inisheen.

"How you ever got here I don't understand," Fitzgerald said.

"Sure, thin, your honour, 'twas one of the boys that tould me the river went all

the way through the town, from ind to ind, and says he, 'Keep to the shtrame, and ask the people from toime to toime.' 'Tis iver since the morning I've been at it; but glory be to God, I found ye at last, Masther Willie; and that's the best part av the story they'll be wanting to hear about, when I get back to Inisheen."

"Well, now, Andy, begin and tell me all the news. Were there many cock about this winter? Was my father out shooting any time?"

Thus invited, the little impish-looking red-haired man, sucking away at a short clay pipe the while, began to tell all that had happened since Master Willie had left Inisheen; and very far and wide did these rambling reminiscences extend. It is impossible to say how interesting these were to Fitzgerald; and yet on one point, the most interesting of all, Andy had nothing to say, and he dared not ask. What, indeed, could Andy know? Miss Romayne had not been back to Inisheen since she had left it shortly after his own leaving; and Andy's visits to

Cork were the rarest things in his life—otherwise it is quite possible he might there have made himself familiar with the appearance of a nigger-minstrel. How could he know anything about Kitty; and yet the charm of all this news to Master Willie was that it spoke to him of the neighbourhood where he and Kitty had been together.

At last, this became too tantalising.

"Andy," says he, "do you remember the young lady that came down to Inisheen, and stayed in Widow Flanagan's house for a time?"

"Faix I do," said Andy, with a facetious grin. "Sure I remimber well enough the poor gyurl your honour made a fool of."

He flushed resentfully. But how could he complain of this familiarity? He had brought it on himself by his injudicious questioning. And then, no doubt, Andy considered this a little bit of astute flattery to regard the young master as a gay Lothario.

"She did not break her heart though ye did lave her, Masther Willie, and that's

thrue," he added, with another pull at the pipe.

"How do *you* know? How do *you* know anything about her?" said Fitzgerald, angrily.

"'Twas Corney Malone," continued Andy, with the composure of indifference—for he doubtless thought this was but as another of his items of news—"was up at Cork, to see his daughter Biddy and the two boys—that's Pathrick with the squint eye and young Corney—he was afther seeing them away to Americay—and sure, your honour, that's the way wid em all now, and soon there'll be nobody left in the counthry but the gossoons and the ould women—and when he came back to Inisheen he was in the kitchen at the Impayrial, and says he, 'Sure the foine young lady that Masther Willie was sportin' about wid hasn't broken her heart for his laving of her.' 'What d'ye mane, Corney?' says I, for I was in the kitchen too—if it was not for a shnipe or two, or a mallard mebbe, how could a poor man earn his living, your honour?—and says I, 'Corney, what

d'ye mane?' 'Faix,' says he, ''tis another one now she's sportin' about wid—a young spark from Dublin.'"

For a moment to Fitzgerald the world seemed to whirl round; a kind of blackness came before his eyes; life was slipping away from him. But the next instant there was a backward rush—of contempt and indignation.

"Who the devil told you to bring your kitchen gabble here?" he said, in a tone that made Andy drop his pipe.

Then he was deeply mortified with himself. As if it was the slightest consequence what reports might be going about Kitty in Inisheen or elsewhere! And was it not shameful that he should have allowed himself to be startled? He instantly assumed a forcedly tranquil air; and said, quite good-naturedly—

"Well, Andy, I suppose there isn't much doing just now in Inisheen; no doubt the people about the Imperial are glad to have things to talk about, however foolish they may be——"

"Thrue for you, sorr," said Andy, contentedly; he seemed quite unaware of having caused any quick pang of dismay.

"Mr. Corney Malone has been putting a lot of nonsense in your head," said Fitzgerald, presently. "I suppose he is vexed because the young lady did not buy any ribbons or pocket-handkerchiefs at his shop—things that he buys in Cork and sells to you Inisheen people at double the price."

"The divil sweep him!" said Andy, with heartfelt satisfaction: it was enough for him that Master Willie had declared against Corney Malone.

He invited Andy to continue his gossip; but that was less interesting now. He scarcely listened. He was thinking of Kitty's letters—the very breathings of her soul; could any one who had read these charming, inconsequent, affectionate prattlings doubt the honesty of her who had written them? It was at himself he was wondering. Why should he have felt, for even a second, this blackness of death grip his heart? It was for this, then, that she had given him the

great treasure of her love—that, at the first idle tale, he should imagine it possible for her to be a common flirt? What Hilton Clarke had said, then, was true? She should not have been left alone? Perhaps she also had the "unappeasable heart"? Perhaps he was ready to believe that the little shoots of tenderness had already gone out to cling to somebody else? Thus it was, that while Andy the Hopper was giving a religiously accurate account of the sayings and doings of everybody in Inisheen, Master Willie—fighting for poor Kitty, who was so far away—was proving to himself that he had never deserved to have her love, or he would not have allowed that foolish rumour to have dealt him such a blow.

Still, he wished to get out into the open air.

"Andy," said he, looking at his watch, "I have an engagement now; but I shall be back by a quarter-past seven. You can't go away down to Limehouse to-night; you would never get there. I will see if the landlady here can get you a bed for the

night somewhere; and you'll want some supper. Wait here till I come back."

"A word wid ye, your honour," said Andy, anxiously. "May I make so bould as to bolt the door when your honour's gone?"

"Oh yes, certainly. But there is no chance of the black gentleman coming back."

It was still raining out here in the dark night; and he put up his umbrella unconsciously; but there were not many objects he passed during his rapid walk up to Hyde Park Gardens that he noticed or could have remembered. His thoughts were far away. Why should poor Kitty have been made the subject of idle rumours like these? What could Corney Malone know of her? Corney Malone was a small shopkeeper in Inisheen; apparently he had been unable to support his family or to procure work for them in the old country; so he had been drafting them off to America. And it was likely that, during that short visit to Cork, he should get to know anything of Miss Romayne! Even if he saw her walking with any one—which was absurd—how could he tell that the person

was from Dublin? What would Kitty say when he should tell her—as he certainly should—that this bit of tittle-tattle, coming unexpectedly, had very nearly parted soul and body? He recalled that sensation with a sort of shudder. It seemed as if the world were falling away from around him; and that he was blind. And all because Corney Malone, in the back-kitchen of the Imperial, had been chattering spiteful nonsense to the idlers about. Perhaps it was well for the symmetry of Mr. Malone's features—which was not much to boast of at the best—that he was not anywhere about Fitzgerald's neighbourhood just at this present moment.

He reached Hyde Park Gardens, and set to work to get through the hour mechanically. Fortunately that was easy; for he had brought with him a newly-published volume of Arctic travel, which was exceedingly interesting, and was making much stir; and he had had time to mark the salient passages. How strange it was to read of that far white land; and to see behind it, all the time, the harbour and the hills of In-

isheen! It was Inisheen he was thinking of; not Cork. He did not like to think of the streets of Cork. And then, all of a sudden, there sprang into his recollection a phrase in one of Kitty's letters, written long ago when she was in Dublin—"Willie, there's a man bothering me with bouquets." His face grew red. He stumbled on with his reading. But the redness of his face was caused by anger with himself that this recollection could annoy him. He had no time to argue the matter with himself; he was reading about the Arctic zone; sometimes Mrs. Chetwynd said "Poor fellows, how they must have enjoyed that Christmas feast," or "Dear me, that was a narrow escape;" and he had to read on and on, with the streets of Cork, instead of Inisheen, thrusting themselves in as a background to all his hurried, staccato, agonised thinking.

So glad he was when that hour of unimaginable torture was over; and he could rush out into the night to avoid the demons that were seeking to devour him! He would not face them; for he would not

acknowledge their existence. He would not admit to himself that he could have any doubts of Kitty's love, her faith, and honour. He hurried on his way; persuading himself that he was sorry for Andy's waiting there alone. It was kind of Dr. Bude to have interested himself in John Ross; and to have got some friend to offer to take two more sketches. Ross must see Andy the Hopper; and make a drawing of him. Ross might make a little copy of it; and he would send that to Kitty to amuse her; to Kitty who was so lonely away up there on the hill. "Just tell them there's a poor girl in Ireland, who is breaking her heart for your sake"—that was what she had written. As for any one sending her bouquets—why not? What more natural? They threw them to her on the concert-stage; why not send them? She had not even seen the man. How could they know that Kitty was married already; that her vow had been registered in the unseen world; that her faithfulness had been celebrated in the great hall where the little people sounded their silver gongs, and the

care of "Catherine" was given over to them? He knew and she knew; that was enough; the outside world might go its way. "Let this be a love night," Kitty had said, down by the running water; she could scarcely be got to repeat the curse; she knew there never would be any occasion for that. And to speak of poor Kitty as having been jilted! Well, no matter. He and she knew; the little ringlets round her ears had heard their secrets; the outside world might go its way.

From these dreams, that seemed to grow brighter and brighter the faster he walked, he was awakened by his arrival at his lodging, and the necessity of supplying Andy with some supper and a bed in the neighbourhood. There was no difficulty about either. At supper (John Ross could not be found, or he would have been invited to join), Andy insisted on observing the etiquette of the luncheons on the mountain. That is to say, he would wait about until the young master had finished—helping now and again to hand things as well as he knew. Then, when he had followed, and disposed of a

hasty meal, he had no objection to light a pipe and chat on the ordinary familiar terms.

But all the fascination had gone from Andy the Hopper's gossip. He found the young master sorely distraught; more than that, he seemed to become impatient from time to time, as though he could not bear having his thoughts disturbed.

"Sure, Masther Willie," said Andy at length, "there was nothing to vex ye in the shtory that Corney Malone brought back from Cork—bad luck to the omadhaun!——"

"Oh, hold your tongue, Andy!" said Fitzgerald, rising and going to the window. "It is still raining. See here, now. Will you be able to make your way back to Limehouse to-morrow?"

"Yerra, your honour, as I came here, I can go back!"

"If there's any sun, you can make straight south till you meet the river. If there isn't, ask the nearest way. Then you'll find yourself near Chelsea pier; and the boat will take you down. Can you remember that, now?"

"Sure we'll shpake of it in the marnin,

your honour," said Andy, who was very comfortable now by the fire.

"I shan't see you in the morning," said Fitzgerald, briefly. "I am going away from London for a day or two——"

"The Lord be marciful to us, Masther Willie; but is it bad news ye've got?"

"No, no. I am coming back in a day or two—long before the *Molly Bawn* can get in her cargo. I'll find you out at Limehouse; and bring you back here. I'll have your portrait painted, Andy; but where's the jacket with the red sleeves?"

"Sure I thought if your honour wanted a sarvint, 'twasn't the ould jacket you'd be afther wishing to have about the house. But that was the jacket that tased the bull into the bog— d'ye mind that, Masther Willie?"

"Don't I!"

This resolution of his once taken—that come what might, he would start by the Irish mail in the morning, and take the long journey to Cork, and seek out Kitty, just for a moment of holding her two shoulders and gazing into the beautiful, soft eyes—Andy's

gossip seemed far more bearable. What was not bearable was that, amid all the vague thoughts conjured up by this aimless talking, now and again his heart should stop short suddenly, as if there was something he dared not face. He could not banish from him the consciousness that, however he might argue himself out of foolish doubt in the daytime, in the night dark things would occupy his mind. And Kitty's eyes were so loving; they would have no reproach in them, if he went to her and asked her to help him to banish for ever this ghastly nightmare. Just to take her hand for a moment—that would be enough. Was it not the hand he had held over the little stream running down to the Blackwater and the sea?

CHAPTER VII.

STORM AND CALM.

This was a strange setting out to go and see Kitty. Where was the gladness of it? Why should there be fear, and a touch of shame, and a hundred horrible distractions and suggestions, instead of the simple joyousness of the thought that soon he would have Kitty's love-lit eyes regarding him? He had not slept much that night. Long before there was any need he had dressed and gone out, making his way to the station through the dark empty streets. In the cold railway-carriage he sat distraught; the spectacle of the gray dawn disclosing itself over the sleeping landscape had no interest for him. He was as one in a dream.

And then sometimes he would ask himself sharp and angry questions. Supposing this rumour to be true, had he not himself

to blame? Why had he ever left Cork? What had the wretched ambition to play a part in literature to do with the happiness of his life? Why had he been content to live in a fool's paradise in London, when he ought to have been by Kitty's side? Was it not his place? But he must needs go and leave her alone—she young and tender-eyed, and wandering from one town to another. How could that fool of a woman be a proper guardian for her? And what more natural than that here or there some one should wish to pay Kitty some attention; she was so quick in sympathy; so gentle hearted; with "her young eyes still wounding where they looked."

And then again he reproached himself for entertaining for a moment the monstrous supposition that his faithful Kitty, who had sworn her love to him over the brook on that wonderful moonlit night, should encourage the attentions of any one. And how was he going to approach her? How make an excuse for appearing in Audley Place? Should he play the spy, then? This was a strange setting out to go and see Kitty.

But when he got near to Holyhead the first glimpse of the sea made his heart leap up. Had not these gloomy fancies and forebodings been the product of a town life? The cold sea-air seemed to drive them away. Of course he should meet Kitty as of old; and they would talk about Inisheen; and if the winter roads were rather too muddy for country walks, they would be quite content with the wide pavements of the town, and would be happy enough in the South Mall, or in St. Patrick's Street, or the Mardyke Parade. Kitty's warm little hand would be on his arm. They would talk about their future life together. Would she look up trustingly, or look down shyly, when he told her of the quaint little house by the river with its woodwork of white and green?

He grew so hopeful that he had even time to think of John Ross; and to wish that he also were on board this great steamer. Would not these wonders be sufficient for him? For at one moment they were slowly steaming through a fog that was suffused with a yellow sunlight—the fog-horn boom-

ing and answering similar warnings from ships that were invisible—and then again they would suddenly emerge into a perfectly clear space—the sea quite smooth and glassy and blue, perhaps some massive brig or heavy schooner lying motionless on the mirror-like surface, with all its idle sails accurately reflected. It was a tedious crossing on the whole. Sometimes they stole out from one of these encircling fogs to find another steamer, or motionless sailing-vessel, most dangerously near. But before they reached Kingstown they had left the fogs completely behind them ; and the sun was shining pleasantly on the harbour and the shipping and the houses, as if his native country were giving him a friendly and smiling welcome.

In the long journey, moreover, away to the south, he had distraction in the society of a middle-aged priest, a person of meagre aspect and of sallow complexion, who had gray eyes with black eyebrows and eyelashes. Fitzgerald very soon found that these gray eyes were capable of expressing a good deal of passionate feeling—especially anger. The

priest was a perfervid politician; and his language was far from temperate. Now Fitzgerald was scarcely a politician at all. The *Cork Chronicle* had not seen fit to take the affairs of the Empire under its care. At Inisheen, again, he had generally preferred to the Tim or Pat who skulked out of the town for midnight drill (frightening away the wild-fowl, besides) the Tim or Pat who worked contentedly at his little farm, and had a pleasant "Good morrow" for the passer-by, and knew whereabouts a hare was to be found. He had his doubts about the wonderful magic to be wrought by "Repeal;" and had a vague sort of belief that, even under the present system, an Irishman, if he condescended to work, had just as good a chance of getting on as a Scotchman or an Englishman. It will be seen that these were not very definite convictions; and this good Father got himself into white heat in showing Fitzgerald how shameful it was of an Irishman to be so indifferent. Fitzgerald took no shame to himself. Politics had not been much in his way. A young man who

has to earn his own living must think of that first before proceeding to look after the affairs of the country (unless, indeed, he is the younger son of a nobleman, when he may have an opportunity of accomplishing the former at the expense of the latter), and though Fitzgerald was quite willing to listen to this impassioned clerical—and rather glad, perhaps, to have the tedium of the long railway journey so relieved—it was not to be expected that he should suddenly acquire an intense interest in party strife. Indeed it may afford an illustration of certain influences that had been at work on him to say that while the priest was denouncing the action of the Government as having been the direct and obvious cause of Irish disaffection, Fitzgerald, regarding the gray eyes, was wondering whether any colour or any artistic skill could convey to canvas the curious light that glowed there.

But as they drew nearer and nearer to Cork—it was now the middle of the night—neither political discussion nor artistic contemplation was sufficient to distract his mind.

He scarcely heard what the good man said. He assented to anything. He was thinking of his meeting with Kitty in the morning; and his heart was heavy with fear—fear of he scarcely knew what. It was so strange that he should be afraid of meeting Kitty! Would she believe that? Would she see it? What explanation could he make?

Then he thought of her recent letters. It is true that, once or twice, she had seemed to grow despondent, and perhaps even a little bit tired of waiting; but for the most part she had written as cheerfully, and kindly as ever. What reason, then, could he give for this sudden visit? Could he confess to her that he had formed suspicions of her—and that on the authority of a rumour brought by such a messenger as Andy the Hopper?

"You don't believe my letters, then," would she not say? "You consider I have been playing the hypocrite? My affection for you was a pretence. You cannot trust what I say; you have to come over and see for yourself; it is thus you recognise the sacredness of the vow that we swore in the glen?

That is the importance you yourself attach to it; that it is so slight a tie it can have melted away already; you come over to see who it is that has so soon come between us two!"

How could he withstand the reproachful look of Kitty's eyes? How could he show to her how weak had been his faith in her? If it were so easily snapped on so slight a strain, how could it withstand the rougher usage, the long wear and tear of the world?

But then Kitty was so honest and so kind; if he were quite frank with her, and told her that his better reason knew how groundless these fears were, and that only to show himself how absurd they were had he taken this long journey—if he were to throw himself on her mercy—if he were to say, "Kitty, laugh at me as you like; but lonely living in London has weakened my nerves; and I can't hear anything about you but my heart jumps; so here I am, just to have a look at you, and to laugh at myself, if you like, for my idle fright." Would Kitty laugh? Not she. She was too kind for that. Her warm

and gentle heart had no malice in it at all. She would say "Then look at me. Look down into my eyes? Can you find anything but love, and truth, and constancy?"

On arriving at Cork, he went to the Imperial Hotel; it was between two and three in the morning. He was very tired, and he slept well. On awaking, he could not understand where he was—for a second; the next second his heart almost stood still: he had to face Kitty.

Then, if so, the sooner the better. When he went out into the wide thoroughfares on this quiet Sunday morning, they were shining just as cheerfully in the sunlight as on that former Sunday morning when his life seemed to be rejoicing within him at the thought of his climbing the steep little thoroughfare at the top of which Kitty lodged. Now he kept his eyes about him, as if people might be watching him. Would they know what had brought him to Cork? There might be a friend of Kitty's somewhere about who would wonder to see him. Perhaps——But no; he could not consider that possible.

And yet it was wonderful to him that perhaps so late as even yesterday Kitty had been looking at these very quays and boats; and had crossed this bridge; and had been opposite yonder house. That was the interest of the scene to him; John Ross's teaching was forgotten; he was not thinking of the colour of the sea, or of the greens and grays and whites of this steep little thoroughfare. He had scarcely a look for Shandon tower, when he had climbed the hill; he did not notice the hoar-frost on the ground where the sun had not reached it; nor the extent of wintry landscape, with its leafless trees and hedges. He only knew that not a soul was visible along the little terrace; and that he dared not go near the house. He must see Kitty alone, and here.

He waited and waited; walking this way and that, but not passing the house. The clock in Shandon tower over there struck half-past ten; but still she did not come. Why should she? No country walks were possible now; no doubt the wet weather had left the lanes full of mud. And if she were

not to stir forth at all—bright as the morning happened to be?

Then the whole aspect of the world changed; Kitty was there. The day seemed fuller and richer; delight took possession of him; he lost fear. Kitty did not see him at first; she looked abroad over the country as she came down to the little iron gate; and as she came along he noticed that she carried a prayer-book in her hand.

"Kitty!"

She looked up—with something of fear, as he thought, in her startled glance.

He seized her hands, and kissed her.

"You are not glad to see me, then?" he said, cheerfully.

"Well, but—but—" she said, "—but nothing has happened?"

"Nothing," said he, "I have come to see you, that is all."

"You have given me a great fright," said she, and she was still a little pale. "Why did you not write to me? What is the meaning of it?"

He was so delighted with regarding her

—the pretty outline of her cheek and chin—the soft, timid blackness of her eyes—the bits of curls that were around her small ears —that he scarcely heard what she said.

"You have not altered a bit, Kitty," said he in his gladness. "You are just as much my Kitty as ever—and ever so much nicer to look at than your portrait. It hasn't been satisfactory, Kitty, trying to get that portrait to speak to me of an evening, when I was quite alone. It looked at me; but not as you look now. But still—why do you look so—so—so——Kitty, are you not glad to see me?"

"Well, of course," said she, but not with the greatest cordiality. "You need not have frightened me. It is a Jack-in-the-box kind of way of coming to see one. Why did you not write?"

"Well, the surprise——" He could not tell her the truth; nay, there was happily no need for him to tell it her. He had looked in her eyes; that was enough.

"And the cost, too, I suppose," said she. "Do you think it is very wise, Willie, to

throw away money like that? I did not understand you were getting on so very well."

He stared at her in astonishment; not hurt nor vexed, but simply wondering.

"Kitty, you talk as if you really were not glad that I have come to see you. You don't talk like my Kitty at all!"

"Of course I am glad," she said. "But people can't always have what they like. I really don't see that it is wise to go throwing away money on these constant trips—especially in the case of people whose future doesn't look over bright."

"Constant trips, Kitty! This is the second since I went to London; and the first was eight or nine months ago——"

"But what is the use of it?"

"There is no use in it—there is no use in it, Kitty," said he, rather bewildered. "And if I had thought that this was to be my reception——"

"Oh, but we are not going to quarrel," said she, with something more of her ordinary kindness in her manner. "If you have

been extravagant, we must make the best of it. I am going to church; I suppose you will come with me."

She put her hand in his arm, in the old familiar way; he could not but take it and pat it.

"I will go to church with you, if you like, Kitty; but might we not have a walk and a chat instead? There must be a lot to say after such a long separation."

"We cannot walk about," she said, "the roads are too wet. Besides I told Miss Patience I was going to church. And besides," she added, with a little laugh, "we have not been quite idle in letter-writing, Willie; there cannot be so very much to say."

"Oh, very well, Kitty. I will go to church with you; I don't care much where we go, so long as I am by your side. And when you have been to church, Kitty, you will be a little more gentle and civil in your manner."

"But I am gentleness and civility itself!" she remonstrated. "It is you who are reck-

less and wild. You don't care what any freak costs you. I believe I was mad when I engaged myself to you."

"No use saying that now, Kitty, it is past praying for."

"I suppose so."

They were on much more friendly terms now. Perhaps Kitty had only resented her having been frightened. It was quite like old times for them to be walking arm-in-arm; and the bell in Shandon tower was tolling; and the people were coming along the various thoroughfares to the church.

"By the way," said he, "we have never settled in what church we shall be married, Kitty."

"That's being rather too particular. That's looking rather too far forward, isn't it?"

"I am not so sure about that," said he.

"You have discovered the gold mine, then? Is that what you came to tell me about, Willie?" she said, with an odd kind of smile.

But they were entering the church porch;

and there was no possibility for further speech. Sitting there beside her, indeed, he did not complain of the enforced silence. To be near her was enough; to have tight hold of her hand; to hear the sweet voice join in the singing. Perhaps he did not listen too attentively to the service or the sermon. Dreams of what the world might hold for him and her together would come in from time to time. The imaginations and ambitions of youth are stimulated rather than retarded by the hushed and mysterious repose of a sacred building; the vague dim background is convenient for the painting of wonderful pictures. And it seemed to him that that beautiful future, which he could adorn and colour at will, had once more and suddenly been presented to him. These horrible doubts had been left behind. They vanished when he took Kitty's hand in his. There was no need for explanation or confession; Kitty and he were together again; life had grown full again of joy and hope. And London, with its struggles and mortifications, and disappointments, was also for-

gotten. Shandon church, with Kitty's hand in his, left him no memories of the Fulham Road. It was as if it had only been the other night that he and she pledged their vows to each other over the running stream.

When they came out again she said—

"Now you will come and have some dinner with us, Willie; and you must try and be civil to Miss Patience."

"I would rather go for a walk, Kitty," said he. "We have said nothing to each other yet."

"What is there to say that we have not said before?" she answered, somewhat saucily, "or that we can't say in letters?"

"Your letters are very nice, Kitty, but they don't speak as well as your eyes."

"Oh, I assure you," she said, gravely, "I am going to take my eyes with me wherever I go. Don't be afraid. I shall have my eyes as much with me when we are sitting down at the table as if we were wandering through these muddy lanes."

No, she would not be persuaded. She thought there would not even be time for a

stroll down to the river-side and back. It was too cold for walking. She was rather tired.

"Tired!" said he, in amazement; "what can have tired you?"

"You are so pertinacious," she said, with a touch of impatience. "You want to argue. You want explanations. When I tell you I am tired, isn't that enough?"

"Well, yes, it is enough," said he, gently. "And I think you must be tired."

The subtlety of this reproof reached her. She coloured a little.

"I want to be kind to you; but you're always quarrelling!" she said.

And then she laughed; and looked so pretty, and confused, and merry all at once, that he could have kissed her there and then, though all Cork might stare.

"I declare it's enough to put anybody out of temper," said she, with all her ordinary frankness and audacity. "Here am I supposed to be cultivating the greatest admiration for somebody who is away in London, working hard on my account. It is so self-denying,

don't you see; and you ought to remember the absent; and all the rest of it. And all at once he turns up on a holiday trip!—frightening you to begin with; and not a word of excuse or reason."

"I have quite sufficient reason, Kitty," said he. "The delight of listening to your impertinence is quite enough."

"I am not impertinent at all; I am talking common sense—and that's a thing you don't know much about, Master Willie. The fact is, these people at Inisheen spoiled you. You think you should have everything you want; now, that isn't quite possible in this fine world."

"Kitty, you have been studying the Poor Man's Annual, or whatever the book is. You are fearfully wise this morning. This is the second time you have informed me that people can't get everything they want; and the truth of the aphorism is more remarkable than its novelty——"

"Oh, dear me, is that the way we talk in London?" said she.

"There's only one thing I want," said he,

not heeding her; "and I've got it hard and fast."

"But you need not break my fingers with your arm. I shan't be able to practise to-morrow. What is that in your breast-pocket that hurts so?"

"That?" said he. "It would be odd if that could hurt anybody. It's your portrait, Kitty. I had a case made for it."

"Let me see it."

He took out the case and showed it her; she only looked at the outside.

"Well, I do declare! the extravagance! And this is the way we are supposed to be saving money in London—buying anything that touches our fancy, or rattling away on a holiday? That is just like you Irish people. I see more and more of it every day. You can deny yourselves nothing. You must always spend more than you've got; and then expect the Government to keep you——"

"Who has been giving you lessons in political economy, Kitty?" he said, as he took the case from her, and put it in another pocket. "You have become fearfully practical——"

"That's what you will never be," she said with a little sigh—real or affected.

"I did not think you would consider that much of an extravagance," said he, "getting a nice cover for your photograph."

"But coming away over here——"

"That seems quite to distress you——"

"Oh dear no," she said—they were now going up to the door of the house, and she spoke in a more matter-of-fact way. "Perhaps I ought to be glad. It shows you can afford it."

As he entered the little passage, he caught a glimpse of a female figure flying upstairs; then Kitty asked him to go into the adjacent parlour, and wait till she had put off her things; then he was left alone.

This meeting with Kitty had not been like that other meeting that he so clearly remembered. Then she had clung to him, crying; she had begged of him never to leave her again; she had offered to live on nothing rather than that he should go away from her. Now she had grown so practical; she seemed to wish him back in London; it

was the cost of his visit, not the surprise and delight of it, that seemed to occupy her mind. But still, here he was in the little chamber that was so familiar; there was Kitty's piano, and the dishevelled mass of music that she never would keep in order; there were the books he had sent her (he knew better than to look whether the edges were cut; disappointments come easily enough without people hunting after them); there was the crystal paper-weight in which Kitty had put his photograph, saying the while, "Well, so long as that is before me while I am writing, I guess I shall look sharp after my grammar. I can see the scowl beginning already. '*None of your impertinence, Miss. Can't you spell the English language yet? You think that is clever, do you?*' So there's a place for you, Mr. Schoolmaster Kill-joy; and when I want a scolding I'll come for it."

The little maid-servant came in and laid the cloth; and then Miss Patience appeared.

Miss Patience received him with much placid civility. She seemed more mysterious and hawk-like than ever, and seemed to take

it for granted that he, having been so much longer in London, should know proportionately more of the secret things going on in politics. Fitzgerald had to explain to her that he had had but little to do with politics; even the one editor he had met in London, he had not seen since last he had visited Cork.

"I heard you were not succeeding," remarked Miss Patience, calmly.

"Succeeding!" he exclaimed, with a sort of start (for he had not looked at his struggles in London in that way). "Well, I have been trying many things; and it is impossible to say whether this or that may succeed. I cannot expect everything at once. There are many openings in literary and newspaper work; of course one must wait. I can't say I have either succeeded or not succeeded."

"Ah," said Miss Patience, complacently. "That is all so unlike commerce. Commerce is secure. Just think of sending a telegram to Odessa—a few words; you get a reply back the same day; you walk down to the Exchange and buy something; and you have

earned £2000. Two thousand pounds!—with so little trouble——"

But here Kitty came in; and she had dressed so prettily and neatly! He could not help regarding her with admiring looks; and Miss Kitty was a little bit shy and conscious; and so they sat down to this middle-day dinner—London, black phantoms, and disappointments all shut out and forgotten.

"It seems to me, Kitty," said he, lightly, "that a commercial spirit has come over this neighbourhood since I was here last. You have been lecturing on political economy all the morning; and now Miss Patience tells me how easy it is to make £2000 by merely sending a telegram to Odessa. It appears to me that it might be just as easy to lose £2000 by the use of the same machinery."

Kitty glanced at Miss Patience with a sort of apprehensive look he could not understand.

"I was observing to Mr. Fitzgerald that I was sorry he had not been successful in London," answered that lady, calmly.

"And I was saying that I had neither

been successful nor non-successful," said Fitzgerald, cheerfully. "Of course there are a great many things to be tried——"

"Oh, of course, of course," said Kitty, hastily, and with a touch of colour in her face. "Of course Miss Patience meant so far only—only so far. We know that it is difficult to—to—to succeed in literature—of course Miss Patience quite understands——"

If Miss Patience understood, Fitzgerald did not. Why this embarrassment; and this talk about the advantages of commerce; and this assumption that he had tried literature in London as a means of livelihood and failed?

Miss Patience said with a gentle smile—

"But when once you have that commercial machinery of which you speak, Mr. Fitzgerald, how nice that must be! It goes on making money for you; you can go away and see the world; your agents are enough. That must be very nice, that independence, and security. The literary man, even the most successful, is in so precarious a position. A tile from a roof knocks him senseless; his means of livelihood vanish. No one else can

do his work for him; it is like an artist becoming blind; there is no machine that can go on independently of him to make money for his wife and children. Ah, there is nothing so safe as that. Commerce in a commercial country is a natural occupation. And it is so safe."

But was it so safe? argued Fitzgerald, somewhat hotly—though he scarcely knew why, for certainly commerce had never done him any harm. If it were so safe, and natural and easy to make £2000 by telegraphing to Odessa, wouldn't everybody be at it? Then look at the common failures. Look at the multitude of commercial men, who were living on the very edge of bankruptcy. It was all very well to have such a piece of machinery as that that had been mentioned, but what if it happened to work the wrong way? What if it came back, and burst you? No doubt it was a good thing if the commercial man could lay by a provision for his wife and children; but could not the successful man of letters do that too? And as for the tile from the roof,

where would the commercial man be if that hit him? Accidents were always possible. What was not possible was that life should be based on idle calculations. And success or no success, machinery or no machinery, as for himself, he said proudly, he would rather earn the plainest living by literature than revel in all the riches that could be procured from Odessa or anywhere else.

Kitty was the peacemaker.

"Oh yes, no doubt," said she (though she seemed anxious to get away from the subject altogether). "One would like to be what you say—I mean, it must be a great thing to be a great man of letters—but there are so few—and it must be so difficult. I am sure that all Miss Patience meant was that it must be nice to have a business going on that leaves you free and gives you no anxiety——"

"I should say there were very few of those," said he. "Leave a business and it leaves you—the proverb is common among business men themselves. You wake up some fine morning and find yourself a bankrupt."

"Ah, very well," said Kitty, with a sigh,

"those at least are very well off who begin life with a fortune ready made for them, and have no anxiety about it."

"I don't know that," said he, "the enjoyment of life is work. I don't see that people who are securely rich are any the happier for it. And I should not think much of the woman whose views of life were coloured by the presence or absence of money."

This was getting more serious. Kitty said, with a pleasant laugh—

"There is not much use in our talking about it anyway; for all the money that you and I have, Willie, or are likely to have, won't make nations fight about us. I want you to tell Miss Patience about all the people you have seen in London. And is that old lady really so nice as you say? And what part of Bantry Bay is the house you told me of, that her nephew had? I looked in a map for Boat of Garry, but could see nothing of it; I suppose it is a small place."

So there was nothing further said about the advantages of commerce over literature —or the reverse; and presently Fitzgerald

found himself being drawn by the humour of the situation into giving Miss Patience such dark hints about the ways and manners of the great politicians then in power as would no doubt have astonished those much-canvassed persons. Kitty seemed greatly relieved; she listened pleasantly; content reigned over the modest banquet. And as for Fitzgerald, it was of little account to him what nonsense he talked or listened to, so long as Kitty was in the room. Miss Patience was treated with the gravest respect; from time to time he could steal a glance at Kitty's eyes.

The middle-day dinner was long over, and they had gathered round the fire, when a step was heard on the little pathway outside, and then a loud knock at the door. Kitty started, and looked apprehensively at Miss Patience. There was an absolute silence; then some sounds in the passage; and presently the maid-servant appeared.

"Mr. Cobbs, Miss."

Fitzgerald was fairly stupefied when he saw this young man come into the room with the air of one who was perfectly acquainted

with both Kitty and Miss Patience. He had never heard a word of him. Who could he be? The next moment he found himself being introduced to the stranger; and these two regarded each other with scrutiny, though the new-comer had the advantage in calmness. He took a chair; put his hat and cane on the table; and asked Kitty if she had been to church that morning.

He was apparently about twenty or one-and-twenty; stout, rather; of middle height; with a fair complexion and close-cropped yellow hair; he was dressed in the extreme of fashion; and his hands and feet were small. Anybody else would have said he was an ordinary-looking, good-looking, well-dressed young man—with perhaps too obvious a taste for jewellery; what Fitzgerald thought of him, and of the circumstances, need not be put down here.

In truth, he was too bewildered to have any clear notion of what he was thinking. But he knew that, whatever the truth of the matter, he could not openly insult Kitty by presuming that anything was wrong. He

resolved to be quite courteous to this stranger. Why should not an idle young gentleman pay an afternoon call? He resolved to be quite courteous; and clenched his hands behind his back to keep him in remembrance.

Kitty, who appeared to have lost her usual self-confident, half-satirical manner, seemed extraordinarily eager to get these two to talk together. Mr. Fitzgerald had just come over from London: had Mr. Cobbs been in London recently? Both seemed inclined to talk to her or to Miss Patience, but not to each other; and the embarrassment of the situation was obviously increasing when Fitzgerald determined to end it. He saw his poor little sweetheart frightened and troubled; and he could not have that. With much frankness he began to speak to this new-comer; and as men find politics their common ground of conversation, he asked Mr. Cobbs if he had noticed any symptoms of disaffection since his stay in the country. Now this was a friendly overture; but the young man with the fat fair face and the blank gray eyes chose to be rather uncivil.

He began to say things about Ireland and the Irish—which was not quite fair, seeing that there were three English people to one Irishman. Moreover he talked the ordinary nonsense that is talked by the well-fed, heavy-pursed Englishman who lays down economical laws about Ireland without any knowledge whatever of the people or of the agricultural conditions of the country. And he was a conceited creature; he liked to hear himself talk; his platitudes were dictatorial in tone.

Fitzgerald was getting wilder and wilder; but he kept his hands tightly clenched. And he would not answer this fellow at all. He spoke to these other two. He told them what he knew, what he had seen. He described the haggard denizens of the bog-land, living amid ague and starvation; he described the poor devils on the hillsides, trying to scrape a living off rocky soil not fit to support rabbits; and then, when the bit of sour bog-land had been slowly reclaimed, or the potatoes beginning to do a little better in the stone-walled enclosure, the agents stepping

in to demand impossible rents, and the landlord, in London, or Venice, or Monaco, knowing nothing about it and caring less; and then the eviction of whole families—the shivering wretches without a bit of firewood, let alone a bit of bread. And this was the system under which you hoped to get a loyal and contented peasantry! With the mass of the people believing that the landlords were leagued against them; that the law was against them; that the soldiers and the police were against them——

But indeed this is no place for a full exposition of the picture that Fitzgerald drew: it is enough to say that a few minutes had been sufficient to turn the Gallio whom the priest had remonstrated with into a politician as violent as the priest himself. Moreover, his vehement declarations were now addressed to Kitty; and Kitty timidly assented. She was staring into the fire; not at all in a contemplative mood.

"But why don't they go away?" said Miss Patience.

"God help them, they are going away,"

said he, "in thousands, though there's many a breaking heart leaving Queenstown Harbour. And it's the young ones that are going; and the old ones, who can do nothing, are left at home to starve."

"Well, if they can't earn a living they must suffer," said the young Englishman. "If you can't live you must die—it's the law of nature. All I know of them is that they're a set of mean snivelling wretches who will fawn upon you if you give them charity, and shoot you from behind a hedge the minute after."

"Only after you have given them charity? Then I should say you were pretty safe!" was the somewhat too fierce reply.

Clearly the air was becoming surcharged; and Miss Patience prudently left the room. What astounded Fitzgerald, however, most of all was that this young stranger seemed so much at home—so familiar with the apartment and its contents, and so familiar in his manner with Kitty. He sat down to the piano and opened it as if he had been quite accustomed to do that. He over-

hauled the music as if it were his own. And at last he said—as he carelessly ran his fingers up and down the keys—

"Won't you sing something, Miss Romayne, and let me play the accompaniment? Oh, I know what will tempt you."

He rose and went to the other end of the room and fetched a book of music back to the piano. He opened it; played a few bars, and then turned round.

"Won't that tempt you?"

"I would rather not sing," said Kitty, without looking up.

"Really? Oh yes, come along!"

"I would rather not sing," said Kitty again.

He turned to Fitzgerald—his fingers still wandering lightly over the keys.

"Do you play?" said he.

The question was innocent enough; but Fitzgerald considered it impertinent.

"No, I don't." said he. "I don't consider it man's work."

"That is because you can't do it, I suppose," said the other.

Now there was just a trifle too much of a sneer in this little speech. Fitzgerald rose, and passed him on the pretence of going to look out. As he passed he said, in a low and clear voice—

"I can't play the piano; but I can throw puppies out of the window."

Now whether this was meant exclusively for the young gentleman's ear or not cannot be said; but at all events, as he happened to cease playing for a moment, it sounded so distinctly that Kitty must have overheard it. Fitzgerald walked on to the window; shoved his hands in his pockets, and stared out. The young gentleman, after a second or two of silence, rose from the piano; took his hat and cane; and said to Kitty, with much formal politeness—

"Good afternoon, Miss Romayne. I shall do myself the pleasure of calling some other time when you are not occupied with visitors."

He left.

"Who is that fellow?" said Fitzgerald, turning angrily from the window.

"What fellow?" said Miss Romayne, with quite as much temper. "He is a gentleman. You have no right to insult him. He is as much entitled to civility in this house as you are. You have no right to insult him. A pretty opinion he will have taken away of you."

"I don't care about his opinion. I want to know what he is doing here."

"He called, like yourself," said she, stubbornly.

"Called? Yes. And his calling has made your name a byword!"

Her eyes flashed.

"Now I see! You have heard some miserable talking; and that is why you have come over so suddenly. Well, I am ready to be cross-examined. I will tell you what you want to know—if that is your purpose."

He looked at her; and knew her mood. It was not the first of their quarrels.

"We will take it that way," said he, coldly. "Who is the young gentleman, if one may be permitted to ask?"

"You have heard his name. He belongs to a firm of merchants in Liverpool."

"Oh, I perceive," exclaimed Fitzgerald, a light breaking in on him. "That accounts for the hymns of praise in favour of commerce——"

"I did not say a word about it," she said hotly. "If you want to insult Miss Patience also, call her in. We ought all of us to have a share of your politeness."

"But he is not looking after the machinery that turns out two thousand pounds in a few hours. He is not telegraphing to Odessa from Cork, is he?"

"How can I tell?"

"Do you know what he is doing in Cork?"

"He is travelling. He is on his way to Killarney."

"Killarney! Killarney at this time of year! And how long has he been in Cork on his way to Killarney?"

"How can I tell?"

"Some time, however?"

"Yes. Some time."

"And he has called here several times?"

"Yes, he has; what harm is there in that?"

"Oh, I did not say there was any harm——"

"But why are you talking to me like that?" said she, and she threw the book she was holding on to the table. "I will not be spoken to like that! I have done nothing wrong. I will not be spoken to as if I were a child. It is you who ought to apologise. You have insulted a friend of mine under my own roof——"

"A friend?" said he, in the same cold way. "Have you come to that, then? But I thought you were willing to have a few questions asked, that was all."

"Yes, I am," said she—though rather sullenly. "You can find out what you like; and then see whether you have any right to come here with your insulting suspicions."

"Have I mentioned any suspicions?"

"You would not be here if you did not suspect me."

"I would like to know a little more about this young gentleman, Kitty."

"Very well."

"Where were you introduced to him—or were you introduced to him at all?"

"I *was* introduced to him," she said quickly, and with her cheeks burning. "I was introduced to him in Dublin."

"In Dublin! And so he has followed you all the way from Dublin?"

"How dare you say such a thing? He can travel where he pleases; he is well off. He may be here on business for anything I know."

"Oh no, Kitty, not on business; he is going to Killarney, in the middle of winter! And isn't it strange that, since you've known him all the time since you were in Dublin, you never thought of mentioning his name in any of your letters to me?"

"I don't see anything strange in it," she said pertly. "I could not mention every trifle. I wrote of the things that were of real interest to you and me."

That phrase "you and me" rather softened him. His anger and indignation were fast oozing away. It was so pitiable

to see Kitty standing before him there, with her eyes cast down, like a culprit.

"I should have thought," said he, in a more gentle way, "I should have thought that anything that affected your good name would be of interest to you and me."

"If—if anybody," she said, with her lips becoming tremulous, "has been saying anything—anything against my good name, I did not expect it—it—it would be you, Willie——"

And here she broke into a passion of tears; and threw herself sobbing into his arms, and clung to him.

"Willie, there's nothing wrong; I cannot bear to have you speak like that to me. You break my heart. I would rather die than have you angry with me. There was nothing wrong, Willie—there is no harm in anything I have done—he—he is only a boy—and he was so good and kind when—when they gave me a benefit—and everybody spoke so well of him——"

"But why didn't you tell me all this before?" said he.

"It would only have worried you," she sobbed. "You were so far away. You could not understand. But now I hate him for coming between you and me. Why should he have caused such trouble? Nobody asked him to come here——"

"Well, Kitty," said he, taking her small head in his hands in the old way and kissing her, "I think no harm has been done; but you have been so imprudent——"

"Oh, I will confess anything, if only you speak to me like that," said she gladly, as she looked up through her tears.

"There would have been no trouble if only you had let me know. Of course, what I said about their taking away your good name was perhaps too serious. They have been talking though; and I should not have heeded one moment what they said if only I had known beforehand——"

"I am sure I don't care what they say," said she, taking his hand and kissing it, "so long as you don't quarrel with me, Willie. And I ought to have known. Miss Patience told me something like this would

happen. 'But,' I said to her, 'surely he can't object to any one paying us an afternoon call; there's no harm in that.' And if you only knew how lonesome it is for us two, Willie, sometimes, you would understand how glad we were to have an occasional visitor. Then he was very kind about the benefit; he took £20 worth of tickets—that was from me, not from the agents, so we did not lose the commission; and I have saved so much this winter that if it were only summer weather now, I'd treat you and me and Miss Patience to a trip to Killarney."

"Kitty," he said sharply, "that fellow is humbugging you. He is not thinking of Killarney at all. He is dawdling after you, and people have noticed it. Now, for your own sake, and for mine—and for the sake of what has been between us in bygone days—you will have to be a little more—more circumspect, Kitty."

"Oh," said she, cheerfully, "I am willing to take any amount of scolding—that way If only you hold me in your arms, you can

scold away. And I believe it all then. I believe I am very bad. Of course I don't believe it when you provoke me; and make me feel hurt and injured; then it's you who are in the wrong. And now you know how to make me do just as you like."

Making up a quarrel with Kitty was very nice; and it generally lasted a good long time between these two. There was a tap at the door.

"Come in!" said Kitty, quickly putting a considerable distance between them.

"Please, miss, Miss Patience wants to know when ye'd be for having your tay."

"Oh, now, at once, tell her;" and then she turned to Fitzgerald, "and now, Master Willie, will you help me to light the gas; and we will have the blind down; then tea; then you shall read to us 'The Battle of Ivry;' and it will be all like old times again. How odd it is," she proceeded, as she laid the cloth, "that we are always glad to have something like something that has happened to us before. I suppose in a year or two we shall be saying, 'Come along, now, and let us

have tea snugly, like the old times, like the Sunday after the quarrel.' And it will be better than if we had nothing to look back to."

"And where will *that* tea take place, Kitty?" said he.

"Where, indeed?" said she, cheerfully. "Who can tell? I suppose in London."

Miss Patience came in, looking rather frightened. But she was greatly relieved to find that her two companions were on excellent terms; indeed, when they all sat down to the tea-table, she had to rebuke Kitty for facetiously referring to Mr. Cobbs as the "fat boy."

"He is in an important position," said she, with some dignity. "He has it in his power to do a great deal of good. He can afford to be charitable. He has not to think of himself."

"That is fortunate, at least," said Fitzgerald, ungenerously, "for he would have little to think of, and little to do the thinking with. Now it seemed to me that he thought a great deal of himself."

"He is a very elegant-mannered young man," said Miss Patience with precision. "He is in an enviable situation—free from care, and able to attend to others. The country needs such persons; not adventurers who make money out of their politics; but gentlemen—educated gentlemen—who are above bribes, and can help to govern the country disinterestedly. He belongs to the class of men to whom we have to look for proper government——"

"God help us, then," said Fitzgerald, inadvertently.

"And I am glad to say that his opinions on public affairs——"

"His what?"

"His opinions," repeated Miss Patience with dignity.

"Well, to call the ignorant prejudices of a conceited young donkey like that, opinions, is, at all events, courteous. But no harm is done by the existence of such creatures. They go circling about the world, aimless, placeless, with no more influence on real politics than the pointers and setters of the United King-

dom. I daresay these young gentlemen encourage the importation of third-rate cigars from Havana; and they add greatly to the profits of the producers of bad champagne; and so there is a kind of reason for their existence."

"He is a very nice boy; and I won't have such things said about him," interposed Kitty; but she was laughing, for Miss Patience looked offended.

"One thing you can't help admiring about him," continued Fitzgerald, talking with familiar contempt about Mr. Cobbs, as if he were some insect before them, "is his forbearance. Just fancy! Most men who could make £2000 in twenty-five minutes by remaining in Liverpool would think twice before coming away over to Cork and doing nothing. Look at that forbearance. He might affect the currency by draining such masses of gold from Odessa and elsewhere into England. Or is it his imagination that is most to be admired?"

"Willie!" Kitty said, reproachfully. "You seem to have caught up the London way of believing in nothing."

"Oh no," said he, "I am pursuing a philosophical investigation. I want to know which part of his character to admire the most. I think it must be imagination—or prudence?—he departed quickly."

"I thought he behaved very well; and you abominably," said Kitty with her accustomed frankness. "And you have never yet apologised to me for your rudeness."

"Well, I do now, Kitty. I shall never be so rude again before you."

She touched his hand beneath the table.

"You shall never have occasion again," said she, in a low voice.

It was a long afternoon and evening; but no afternoon and evening was half long enough when he and Kitty were together. And Miss Patience was kind; she went away occasionally—perhaps to her politics; leaving them together in the hushed warm little parlour, all thoughts of the dark world of London shut out, and only present to them the memories of summer rambles and of moonlight walks along the coast at Inisheen. Kitty was as pleased, and pretty,

and fascinating as ever; you would not have thought that, but a few hours before, she had been standing opposite him with her eyes flashing and her cheeks pale with anger. She was now so gentle, so winning; the touch of her warm little hand was soft as velvet.

"And must you really go away again to-morrow, Willie?" she said—she was seated on the hearthrug before the fire, her head just touching his knee.

"I must indeed. I wrote to Mrs. Chetwynd begging her to let me off to-morrow night; and to-morrow night I shall be neither there nor here, but on the wide sea that separates us, Kitty."

"It is such a long journey to take for merely a little talk like this."

"For more than that, Kitty."

She blushed somewhat, but said nothing.

"I am coming to the station to see you off, to-morrow," said she, at length.

"Would you?" said he, with great delight. "Would you take the trouble?"

"The trouble!" she exclaimed. "And I

am going to do more than that, if you will let me. I want to get a proper kind of luncheon for you in a little basket; because —because it is a woman's place to provide such things"—said Kitty, with a trifle of self-conscious pride. "And I know what you men do; you stuff a lot of sandwiches into a piece of paper, and take them out and eat them when they are like leather."

"Not I," said he. "I have had a warning. An Academician's wife told me that sandwiches were most pernicious."

"An Academician's wife!" said Kitty. "And yet you deny you go out among those great ladies in London! Why don't you make haste, and make me a great lady, and take me about with you, instead of gallivanting about by yourself."

"Am I not making haste, Kitty?"

"Yes; sitting by a fire in Audley Place, and letting me stroke your hand, while you ought to be fighting tooth and nail in London, with all your armour on, careering everything down before you."

"If it was that kind of fighting, Kitty,

perhaps it would be easier," said he, absently; for he was thinking of the lonely room to which he was returning, with no Kitty to sit by him on the hearthrug, and stir the fire when it was getting low.

Next morning he thought she had forgotten her promise; for it was near the time of starting, and yet no Kitty had put in an appearance. Then he saw her come quickly along, alone; and she was breathless when she reached him.

"Oh, Willie, I thought I was too late; but here is the basket; and if the pie is a little warm still, it will be cold by the time you want it. I made it myself," she said, with a laugh and a blush, "last night after you were gone——"

"Last night!" he said. "After twelve?"

"What was that compared to your comfort?" said she, boldly. "And I thought you would like to know that my hands could do something besides—besides kissing a good-bye to you. And I was up this morning by six to get it in the oven. Oh, Willie, I have had so little time," she added, breathlessly,

"I could not quite get all the sawdust off the grapes—so be a little careful——"

"Oh, never mind these things," said he—for the guard was impatient. "But it is so kind of you, Kitty. You are always kind. And now I am going away again—who knows for how long?"

"That depends on you," she said, with a smile; and she kissed him; and she kept waving her handkerchief until the train was quite out of sight.

He was alone in the carriage; and he was gazing out of the window, seeing nothing. His whole visit this time had been so rapid and so strange. And he was so glad to take away with him the renewed assurance of Kitty's faith and constancy and love, that he could scarcely admit to himself the presence of a vague impression that it was now become more urgent than ever that he should seek to win his way in London.

The day wore on with these imaginings, until at last the base claims of hunger reminded him that he had been so ungrateful as to forget all about Kitty's parting gift.

You may imagine the interest and delight with which he opened the pretty little basket, and bethought him of how Kitty's own fingers had placed such and such things there for him. Indeed a woman's hand was visible everywhere in the neatness with which everything was wrapped up and arranged. There was a small table-napkin, as white as snow. The knife and fork and spoon were all brilliant; and there was a tiny tumbler along with the half-bottle of claret. There was the pie that she had waited up in the night-time to make for him; and had she dressed the salad, too? He could see no sawdust at all on the bunch of grapes. And then his eyes and thoughts wandered away altogether from the materials of the little banquet; and he thought what a pretty housewife Kitty would make, filling the rooms with light, and singing, and hurrying up everybody in her fearless, independent way. And the rooms through which he saw her moving were the rooms of the little green and white house at Chelsea.

He had a beautiful night for crossing. The stars were extraordinarily brilliant. As the huge ship ploughed her way through the black waves, all the interest of the night was centred in the clear dome above, where the myriad eyes throbbed or gazed steadily. There was the resplendent Jupiter, not far from the misty Pleiades; Mars was unusually high in the heavens; Orion's jewels flashed; the great world above was lit with a million fires, while the one below was but a mournful sound of unseen water. And perhaps this young fellow sitting there on deck in the cold night (with his heart very warm with love) may have laughed to himself when he imagined what the scientific folk who came to Hyde Park Gardens would think of his way of looking at the stars. He had no anxiety to know whether there was any chloride of sodium in them. When he regarded their brilliancy, he thought of Kitty's eyes; their patient reappearance night after night, year after year, only reminded him of Kitty's faithfulness; and the far-reaching and luminous heavens them-

selves seemed really to belong to Inisheen, and to him, and to her, and to their secret walks along the shores in the nights gone by.

CHAPTER VIII.

A PROSPECT.

The first thing that Fitzgerald did on returning to London was to hunt up Andy the Hopper, and transfer him from Limehouse to the Fulham Road; and during these next few days, while Andy hung about and acted as general servant as well as he could, and while John Ross and his neighbour made successive experiments with the wild-fowl and game that had come from the south of Ireland, things went cheerfully enough. The woodcock were Inisheen woodcock; and he was proud that Ross approved of them highly. Then he took Andy to see one or two of the sights of London; but Andy was somewhat of a failure. He merely gaped. Fitzgerald (so desperate was his need) thought he might induce some editor to accept a paper descriptive of a wild Irish-

man's first impressions of the great city; but he could not make much out of the staring eyes, the open mouth, and the occasional muttered exclamation which were the only evidences of Andy's amazement.

At last, when Andy was going away, Fitzgerald said to him—

"Look here, Andy, I have a word for you."

"Av ye plase, sir."

"You may as well know that I am going to marry the young lady, who was at Inisheen that time you remember."

"Baithershins, Masther Willie!" exclaimed Andy, with a vast and capacious grin. "'Twas the divil's own diversion for ye to go sporting about with the gyurl, and then to go and lave her like that——"

"Hold your tongue or I'll pitch you down the stair," said Fitzgerald, angrily; and Andy's face changed instantly, for he perceived that this was no joke at all.

"Is it thrue, Masther Willie?" said he, with great concern.

"It is true. She is going to be my wife; now you know."

"'Tis the proud gyurl she'll be, thin!" said Andy. "Oh, didn't I suspect that same now, for all the jokin'? 'Sure,' I said, 'Masther Willie wouldn't be afther takin' the throuble to walk about wid the English young lady if 'twasn't a coortin'?' Oh, the beautiful young crayture now! Sure a purtier young lady ye wouldn't find betwixt the Blackwater and the Shannon. She's the flower o' faymales, and that's thrue."

"The what?"

Andy glanced at the young master anxiously.

"'Tis what they say in poethry," said he, with some hesitation.

"Well, attend to me, Andy. There has been some gossiping going on in Inisheen, I gather. Well, now, attend to this: the first that you hear say anything about that young lady, you take your hopping-pole and lay it over his head. Do you understand that now?"

"Faix, it might be my own head I'd have to break, thin," said Andy. "For wasn't it mesilf that brought the story of what Corney

Malone—the divil sweep him!—was saying? But sure, Masther Willie, when they know you're going to marry the young lady—the beautiful crayture she is!—do ye think they'd be afther saying anything more?" Then Andy, after a second, added valiantly: "No matter, Masther Willie; if the laping-pole will do, 'tis at your sarvice; and divil the man or boy in Inisheen has a head so thick that it won't break—glory be to God!"

But Fitzgerald also knew that there would be no more gossiping after this authoritative announcement; and why should it not be known that he was going to marry Kitty?

So Andy went away back to Ireland; and the days passed; and spring came in mild and humid weather to Chelsea; and the old hard fight was continued, now with illusive hopes, now with keen disappointments, always with a terrible anxiety. For that was what he had definitely brought away with him from Cork; a haunting consciousness that it was necessary he should get on at once. And how could he bring editors to understand that? They knew nothing about

Inisheen. They would keep his MSS. for indefinite periods; sometimes lose them; sometimes return them after the subject of which they treated had passed from the public mind. For Fitzgerald, having brought his burlesque of pot-house politics to an end, had begun to try his hand at real politics; but the difficulty was to get an opening for these carefully-prepared articles of his. More than once the conductor of a journal took the trouble to write to him, in returning one of these, to explain that he approved of it, and might have used it in his paper, but that all such subjects were treated by the regular members of his staff, which at the moment was full. Fitzgerald found most encouragement from the projectors of new magazines, who were prepared to put him on their staff at once; but as his payment in most cases was to be contingent on some future share of profits, the arrangement did not seem satisfactory. By some extraordinary chance, which he himself could scarcely understand, he got one article inserted in the monthly magazine which at that time was far and away ahead of

all its fellows ; and as his name was attached, he had at least the pride of sending it to Kitty. But his subsequent efforts in that direction only resulted in heartrending delay and disappointment. In short he had to learn, as many an unfortunate wretch has had to learn and will have to learn, that fugitive writing of this kind is valueless as a means of living.

"Ye are trying too much, laddie," said John Ross to him, one evening, when they were having a smoke together in the hollow-sounding studio. "Ye are writing about everything in the universe. Is it politics or leeterature ye're after ?"

"I don't know," said Fitzgerald. "What I do know is that I ought to have been learning shorthand when I was shooting snipe. Then I could have got on in newspaper work by the usual stages. Now I can't get my foot on the first rung of the ladder—unless it's the treadmill : that's the only occupation in this country that you can get hold of without any introduction or training. Oh, of course, what I should like would be literature," he added, remembering

the dreams with which he had set out for London. "But I don't see any permanent work in that; what they seem to like best is my verses; and these you can't manufacture at will. I have once or twice tried writing a novel; that is no use; I found myself imitating somebody else in spite of myself. No, the only constant occupation for a writing man I see is newspaper work, and all the newspaper-offices are full. Never mind," said he, cheerfully, as he struck another match, "I can live. I can always earn my living as a gamekeeper. Perhaps it was too cheeky of me to come away from Cork and attempt to fight my way single-handed in London literature. I had no introductions; no influence. I got some help at the beginning; but I had to pay for that pretty heavily. Well, I have not quite given in yet. I mean still to try for a time. And then if I am beaten—well, I shall have had the experience; that is something."

He had been talking very contentedly and even cheerfully; but now a slight shadow seemed to come over the square

forehead and the clear and thoughtful eyes.

"Life would be a simple matter—it would be easy enough," said he, "if one had only oneself to consider. But it is different when you have to ask some one else for the sacrifice of expectations."

Ross glanced at him.

"That depends on the young lass herself," said he, "that depends on what *she* is like."

Fitzgerald was too deeply occupied to resent the imputation or inference.

"Ross," said he, eagerly, "you've never told me what you think about women. You've talked about everything else in the world, I believe, except that."

The other laughed.

"What I think about women?" said he. "The laddie's cracked. What chance has any man o' forming a judgment on the half o' the human race? Ye may get to know two women, or three women, or may be even half a dozen women, in the whole course of your life; and ye're well off if

they happen to be decent sort o' creatures, for it's from them ye are likely to form your opeenion o' the whole lot."

"You remember me telling you about Hilton Clarke?"

"I remember the meeserable wretch," said Ross, plainly.

"Oh, but I bear him no grudge," said Fitzgerald. "At least, not for the money part of the business. I don't believe he meant to swindle anybody. It was merely that he was lacking in a kind of sixth sense that keeps most people straight about money. I daresay, if he had money to-morrow, and I wanted it, he would let me have it."

"I daresay he would do nothing of the kind," said Ross, severely. "And the sixth sense ye speak of—do ye mean common honesty?"

"Well, it isn't that that I remember against him; but he had a most pernicious habit of putting things into your head——"

"Put them out again, then, for God's sake. Would ye listen to the teaching of a man like that?"

"But it is not so easy to put them out. You keep asking yourself whether his theories are true or not; and then life is so much of a mystery; and people who are older than you yourself are must have had so much more experience of human nature——"

"That ye should believe them? No. I say no!" John Ross said; and whatever he did say he said emphatically, even if it involved the knocking off the head of his pipe. "I say no. I say, ask first of all with what sort of spectacles they have been looking at human nature."

"For example," said Fitzgerald—but why did he avert his eyes, and pretend to be busy with the stove, to hide his shamefacedness?—"he had a theory, or a conviction rather, that there were many women who were really too affectionate—too kind and generous—who could not help falling in love with anybody who was near them. He said they would keep quite faithful and true so long as you were beside them; but in absence they could not help letting their

tenderness of heart begin to suggest possibilities: until, perhaps before they quite knew themselves, they grew fonder and fonder of the new-comer; and then you see, what the world would call the breaking of a troth, heartlessness, or something like that, had really come about because the woman had too much kindness and affection in her nature——"

"What kind of a woman do ye call that?" said Ross, with harsh contempt. "What kind of affection do ye call that? I call it the affection that exists between rabbits. God be thanked, that's no the kind o' women I have met——"

"Then you don't think there are such women?" said Fitzgerald, eagerly, and he raised his head at last. "Women whose excess of kindness would always be keeping one in anxiety? You think that was merely a fantastic theory?"

"I mind one poor lass," said Ross, absently, "that had too much love in her heart; but that was not the way it went. A winsome bit lassie she was; so jimp and

neat and blithe; and I think half the laddies in the school where I was at Beith were head over ears in love with her; and mony's the sair fight there was amongst us about her. She was to be married to a young fellow—a sailor-lad he was, I think, though she was but sixteen or seventeen; and what must he do one night at Greenock but get fuddled and go out capering in a boat in one of the docks and get drowned in the dark. The poor lass never held up her head. She had some money, too; for her father had left her some bits of cottages at Beith; and many a one came after her; but she had not a word for any of them. She just dwindled away—though she had been as healthy a lass as any in the parish; and in three or four years' time they put her in the kirk-yaird; and though folk say that nobody ever dies o' a broken heart, I do not know what else it was that Jean Shaw died o'. Ay, that was one. Then there were two more——I may say three—that never married because they could not get the man they wanted. That's four—a good number in

one man's experience. Oh, but I've known the other side, too—young lasses changing their mind—giddy creatures, for the most part, wanting to cut a dash with more money than their first sweetheart had. And there's one," said he, with a grim smile, "that I would like to know more about now. She was in a place in Glasgow — I mean she was a servant-lass — and her sweetheart was a working plumber—a roaring, swearing, drunken sort o' fellow. Then she must needs take up with some shopkeeper-laddie, as being more genteel, d'ye see? and there was some quarrelling until the plumber got hold o' the young fellow, and smashed him almost into bits. That was a seven years' business for him. So as soon as he was safe out o' the way, she married the shopkeeper; and no doubt everything went well until the seven years began to come down to six and five and four and three. The last I heard was that the husband and wife were living in daily fear o' their lives; for the plumber was soon to be out; and he had sworn to murder the pair o' them. Man,"

said Ross, bringing down his fist on his knee, "why dinna you leeterary people go where ye can see human passion in the rough, where ye can see the real tragedy of life? That is no among the fine people—the nobeelity; for there money lets an ill-assorted couple go different ways; and at the worst, if the wife goes to the bad, the husband is too much of a philosopher to bother himself into a rage about it, for he has run through all the experiences of life long before he ever got married. And it's no among the middle classes; they are too well-conducted and circumspect; they fear the talk o' their church-going and chapel-going neighbours. No, it's among the lower, or even the lowest classes, that the passions are simple and intense. When the woman is faithless, the man murders her, or tries to, regardless of consequences. Starvation, the madness o' drink, the pitiableness of the weak, the fight for bread—these are the things that show ye what the struggles, the passions, the bigness, the littleness o' human nature are. Leave your

books, man, and get out to Bermondsey, or Spitalfields, or Shadwell, and study the men and women there——"

"Oh, I am not a dramatist," said Fitzgerald. "Besides, I think you are quite mistaken." Ross was continually dogmatising about his own profession; why should not he about his? "You may find brute force there, and violent jealousy; anything else you must take with you. And when you begin planting your literary theories—your noble sentiments, that are the product of refinement—into that coarse soil, the crop is merely affectation. The bully who suddenly bursts out crying when he hears a canary is a mere sham—unless he is drunk, when he would probably get up and strangle the canary. Passion in the rough?—Yes, the rough sometimes has a good deal of passion—when he kicks his mother. Thank you; but before I go and try to paint a picture of the costermonger—with a pewter pot in his hand, and love and innocence in his heart—I shall wait to see what effect a course of lectures on limelight will have on him."

Ross regarded him for a second.

"Ye're a deep young fellow," he said, "for all your frank face. Or is it pride? I'm afraid the young lady up there and you don't get on very well together."

"Oh, I think she means to be very civil to me. I think, from little suggestions, that she has been talking to her aunt about sending me over as bailiff to an estate they have at Bantry. Well, I don't wonder at it. My present post is rather too much of a sinecure."

"Other people manage to live on sinecures happily eneuch," said Ross, bluntly, "I wish to heaven I had half-a-dizzen o' them!"

"And then," continued Fitzgerald, with some tell-tale colour in his face, "the other people about that house are all such hard-working people—I mean those you sometimes meet by chance—that one feels such an idler. I do believe at this minute," he said, in desperation, "if they were to give me a decent salary as bailiff at that farm, I'd take it and have done with literature. I can enjoy literature without trying to make any;

and I should be in my own element over there. But what were we talking about?" He pretended to make a cast back. "Oh yes; about Hilton Clarke's theories about women. Well, here are other two women —these Chetwynds—who, I am sure, are perfectly honest and upright and believable. My experience has not been very great; I can scarcely remember my mother; and I had no sisters. But most of the women I have been more or less acquainted with, have been, as it seemed to me, a good deal better and more honest, and more unselfish than the men; and—and in short you wouldn't be inclined to doubt your own experiences even when a man who has seen more of the world than you have, tries to make you less believing?"

"I would send him to the devil!" said Ross, decisively. "Believe in the honesty of men and women, and in the wise providence and justice o' things as long as ye can; and when ye cannot, put it down to your personal bad luck, and dinna accuse everybody of stealing because here or there

some one has robbed ye. The truth is, ye are anxious about that young lass in Ireland."

Fitzgerald started, and was inclined to be angry. But what was the use? His friend had guessed the truth, much as Fitzgerald had tried to conceal it from him and also from himself. Yes; he was anxious; it had come to that.

"Is she a braw lass?"

"I think you mean handsome? No, she is not imposing, if that is what you mean. But she is exceedingly pretty. I can talk to you about her with impunity; for you don't know her name. She is very pretty, and very winning and tender-hearted, and clever too. Think of her being content to wait on and on like this, while I am floundering about without any certain prospects whatever."

"Content to wait!" exclaimed Ross. "Goodness me, what would be the worth of her if she were not content to wait? A fine kind of lass to have that would be. And ye have two pounds a week as a certainty, with constant small addeetions? Get her over,

man, and marry her! Two pounds a week! The great majority of the human race live on far less; and what is good for the muckle is no' bad for the pickle."

This bold and sudden challenge startled him; but was not the wild project as beautiful as it was wild? The thought of it! What if Kitty were really to consent? They could take a couple of small rooms somewhere, and work and wait in patience—with love and blessed content their constant companions—until the happier time came? Would it not be fine in after-life, when things had gone well with them, to be able to talk of their early struggle and of their adventures and their fears and hopes? Kitty's letters had not been very cheerful of late: might not this sudden challenge deliver her from the bond of despondency?

But he dared not make so fateful a proposal without much anxious care; and as it turned out, on the very next evening, something happened that promised to aid him most materially. When he had got through his appointed hour, and had risen to

leave, Mrs. Chetwynd said to him—obviously with a little embarrassment—

"Mr. Fitzgerald, I—I want to explain something. You know you are on such friendly terms with us—at least I hope so—I hope you feel quite at home in the house—it is rather difficult to speak about money matters. But they have to be spoken about; for every one must live, I suppose. And—and, in fact—Mary was saying that a great deal more of your time was being occupied than appeared to be the case——"

"Oh, I hope you won't speak of it," said he. "My time is not so valuable."

"Everybody's time is valuable," said the old lady, with a smile, "for it is easy to make it so. Mary was saying you must spend a great deal of time in looking over these new books——"

"That is a pleasure to myself."

"Now, Mr. Fitzgerald, is it fair? I have a frightful task to get through with, and you won't let me alone. If Mr. Scobell were in England, I should have asked him. However, here is the truth; that my conscience

won't allow me to occupy so much of your time on the present terms; and I propose to make a difference. If," said she, rather hesitatingly, "if you would kindly take that envelope with you, you will find in it the arrears—a small sum, but my conscience will be clear—and now, not another word—for I've got through with it, and I am quite happy. Now, good-night, and not a word."

"Not of thanks?" said he.

"No; good-night; go away," said the old lady, with a light little laugh; she was clearly very well pleased to have got it over.

In this open and unaddressed envelope he found a cheque, drawn out in Mary Chetwynd's clear and precise hand, and signed by her aunt for £65. The rapidest of calculations showed him what this meant. He was to have two hundred a year, then, instead of one? The vision that this opened up left no room for those over-sensitive perplexities that he had laid before his friend Ross. His heart was beating too quickly. The question was what arguments, what

entreaties, what pretty phrases would bring Kitty to him from over the sea.

He walked rapidly, he knew not whither. The darkness was pleasant. Never had he struggled so with the composition of any leading article affecting the interests of India, or China, or Peru. He tried to meet beforehand every possible objection. He thought of all the nice things he could say to win her consent. At what hour he got home to his lodgings he did not quite know; but that important letter was yet far from being arranged.

It took him, indeed, the whole night to write it; destroying numberless copies that seemed to him to leave a loophole of escape here or there. He felt that Kitty's letters had been somewhat cold and matter-of-fact of late; he was afraid she might judge this one coldly; he had to make everything safe, so that she should feel the future was absolutely secure. And when at last he did go out to post this letter at the nearest pillar letter-box, behold! the wan gray light of daybreak was stealing over the skies, and

far away there was the rumble of the first of the carts.

I do not know who was the Postmaster-General at that precise time; but have no doubt that when Fitzgerald dropped the heavy letter under the metal lid, he was as impatient with him as Juliet was with her nurse.

> " Love's heralds should be thoughts,
> Which ten times faster glide than the sun's beams,
> Driving back shadows over low'ring hills:
> Therefore do nimble-pinioned doves draw Love,
> And therefore hath the wind-swift Cupid wings.
> Now is the sun upon the highmost hill
> Of this day's journey——"

Well, the sun was not yet quite so high; but it was slowly spreading abroad its beams; and the world of London was awaking. Fitzgerald was in no humour for sleep; he thought he would rather go away down to the river, to have a look at a little green and white house there; and there was a light as of the dawn on his face.

CHAPTER IX.

SOME CORRESPONDENCE.

Yes; there was no doubt of it; during the months that had elapsed since his hurried visit to Cork, Kitty's letters had grown much more cold, or, at least, much more reserved and matter-of-fact; while now and again there was a tone of disappointment running through them which he had striven to overlook at the moment. Now, as he re-read them, with this glorious prospect—this near and shining future—before him, he sought for reasonable explanations and excuses, and easily found them. The spring had been wet and boisterous; and Kitty's spirits were readily affected by the weather and its discomforts. Then she had had a good deal of travelling; and that would account for the curtness of some of the notes, Kitty being ordinarily a most profuse letter-writer. And

then again the news that he had had it in his power to send her was not of the most cheering description—though he had tried to put the best face possible on matters. Altogether, looking over these letters again, and regarding them by this new light, he could find nothing disquieting in them; on the contrary, they were quite natural in the circumstances: the question was how would Kitty write now?

He could not doubt how she would answer his appeal. The summer was coming on, with all its beautiful new hopes, new desires, new possibilities. During that winter, Kitty had again and again, and not at all to his sorrow, pretty plainly hinted that she was dissatisfied with her present way of living. It had become distressingly monotonous. There were no ambitious hopes to lure her on. Only once had she expressed herself as being pleased with her surroundings; and that was on a professional visit to Dublin, where, instead of having to go to the usual lodgings, she had been the guest, along with Miss Patience, of the wife of the

manager of a theatre there; and that lady had introduced Kitty to a number of people, and made her life a little more cheerful for her for a time. Then she had to return to the provinces; and to miserable rooms; and the fatigues of travelling; and, as the weather happened to be exceptionally bad, it was no wonder she should grow tired or even querulous at times. And when people are disheartened, they do not write long and playful letters, full of pretty sentiment and pleasant humour. How could Kitty be cheerful and amusing with her fingers benumbed with the cold, her feet wet, and adverse winds blowing the smoke down the chimney?

But now all this would be altered. There would be no more need for letters; Kitty herself would be there to talk to, to talk, and submit to be teased. And what happy excursions would there be on the clear summer mornings, wandering about Chelsea to fix on their future and permanent home. As for himself, he would not choose, even in imagination, until Kitty should come over. She ought to have her share of the responsibility.

And what her eyes approved, he did not think he should find much fault with.

That anxiously awaited letter was a long while in coming; many and many a time, when he heard the postman ascending the stair outside, had his heart beat quick only to be disappointed. But at last it came; and to his astonishment he found on the back of the envelope the name of a Killarney hotel. He hastily opened it—the letter was written on hotel paper—in fact there was an engraving of Lough Leane at the head of the page! How had Kitty got there? She had not said a word of any such intention!

Breathlessly he ran his eyes over the various sheets—for this time Kitty had written at length—hoping to find some phrase decisive of her reply. She had got his letter evidently; but nowhere was there any positive acquiescence or positive refusal so far as he could gather from that hurried and uncertain glance. And so—with more dread of disappointment than actual disappointment—and still with some trembling hope—he

forced himself to read the letter systematically through.

"My dear Willie — Your letter has followed me here; and I will never forgive you for not having driven me to go to Killarney many a day ago. I suppose it was all because of your jealousy; you wanted to bring me here yourself; as if the place belonged to you! And the idea of my having been many a time at Limerick, and Mallow, and Cork; the idea of my having had to sing the Killarney song in the panorama; without even having been to this Paradise! I suppose I thought it was too familiar, because I knew all the places in the photographs in the windows; but neither they, nor the panorama, nor anything else, could have told me of the charm of this beautiful neighbourhood. We were out last night in a boat; there was no moon; but the stars were *lovely*. We rowed to Innisfallen; and I sung one or two songs—the sound was so strange when we got near the island; I was wondering whether the ghosts in the

Abbey would hear. What a beautiful night it was.

"Of course you are asking what brought me here. Well, dear Willie, I have had a great deal of bother, and some hard work of late; and I thought I had earned a little holiday; and everybody said we ought to go to Killarney in the spring; and Miss Patience and I have done it as cheaply as we could. Where in the world could we have come to for such perfect peace and rest? This hotel is nearly empty; when we went to Muckross Abbey and the Torc Cascade and all round there, we were quite by ourselves; and when we go out on the lake there are no *tourists* anywhere. The day we arrived, however, there was a fearful tempest. I said to myself, Goodness gracious, is this Killarney? I thought Killarney was always quite still, with moonlight on it (as it was in the panorama). The wind and the rain were dreadful; the mountains were quite black except when the clouds crossed and hid them; and the waves on the lake smashed on the rocks at Innisfallen and

sprung up in foam just like the sea. But now everything is quiet and lovely; and I feel as if this was the Vale of Avoca that I should like to rest in, with the friends I love best; only I suppose there never is rest like that for everybody; trouble is the policeman that steps in and orders you to move on.

"Dear Willie, I feel quite afraid to begin and try to answer your letter; for I know you won't understand what I mean about it. I entirely agree with you about a private life—it has been the wish of my heart for many a day; I am quite tired of the annoyances of my *public* one. People think it is a fine easy thing to earn your living by merely singing songs; I wish they knew what hard work and uncertain work it is. Of course, one's vanity is pleased sometimes, when you have nice things said to you, or when the audience is very enthusiastic; but what a temporary thing that is! When I stayed with Mrs. Milroy in Dublin I was quite delighted with the little occupations and visits, and amusements with which they passed the time; and I know that would

suit me; and as for your suggestion that I might some day regret giving up this kind of life, you might have saved yourself all the arguing against it; it is the last thing, I *know*, that will ever occur to me; and I should be ready this minute to give it up, if I could do so safely.

"People never do get what they want, I suppose; and I suppose it is better for them in the long run. And for you to think, just now, when you are making a path for yourself that will lead to future fame, of hampering yourself in the way you propose —well, I can understand your dreaming of it, for you were always so romantic and strange in your notions, but I have got worldly wisdom enough for both of us, and I can see what a pity it would be. When you want a clear way for your genius, you tie all this domestic anxiety round your neck! Consider how precarious you would be. That old lady might die at any moment, and then ——! I am afraid, dear Willie, that your literary prospects by themselves wouldn't warrant you in doing as you propose; and

do you know I, for one, am not so sorry there should be such difficulty and hard work, for if there was not, wouldn't everybody be at it, and where would be the glory of making a name for yourself, if everybody could step in and do it? I know you distrust your powers; I don't; and I should think myself mean and unscrupulous if I allowed my private wishes to interfere with your future. I know some day you will have reason to thank me. Was it not me who sent you away from that miserable little office in Cork to take the place that your genius entitles you to? I as good as said—

> 'Go where glory waits thee,
> But while Fame elates thee,
> Oh! still remember me!
> When the praise thou meetest
> To thine ear is sweetest
> Oh! then remember me!'

I know you always laugh at my poetry; but I like poetry that one can understand, that has common sense in it; and there is common sense in that. I expect great things of you; and so would the world if it knew as much as I did; and it seems to me that, with gifts

such as yours, you have no right to throw up your career, or at least seriously hamper it, for the mere gratification of a piece of romance. But that was always like you, Willie. You look at things in such a strange way. You don't seem to value things as other people do; and you don't appear to consider it is your duty to get on in the world, and make money, and a security for your old age. I have seen a good deal of the world; I have seen what money can do; what good you can do with it; how independent it makes you. I believe if it had not been for me, you would have kept on in Cork, simply because you had the chance of living a half-sailor, half-gamekeeper life at Inisheen; and you would never have thought of the time when you would no longer be able to go after rock-pigeons. And so, dear Willie, you must try and be a little less romantic in the meantime; and do justice to the gifts you have; and by-and-by you will thank me, and say that everything has been for the best.

"Now I know you have quite misunderstood me; and you are angry, in your wild

way, and accuse me of being mercenary—me! I have never had enough money to know what mercenariness was—and of course you are impatient that everything can't come about just as if it were a story-book. Alas! I wish it could; and everybody be satisfied; but there is always trouble, even to those who make the strongest fight against the inclinations of their heart, and try to do what is best for every one around them. Just imagine me lecturing you like this! And yet you know, dear Willie, that you are too poetical; and so I must be the commonplace person—even here, with Killarney before me. There was a dreadful accident to the coach as we were coming. There is a steep hill some miles before you get here, and one of the two horses fell, and the force of the coach dragged it along, and the poor beast's knees were horrible to look at. It just managed to walk the distance; though I thought every moment it would go down. But what a fine thing it must be to have a carriage and one's own horses, and drive all through these beautiful places quite at your leisure, and

without a thought for the future. Just fancy not having to care a farthing whether June or August is near or far off; nothing but to enjoy the present moment; and drive from one hotel to another, irrespective of time and without a thought about the cost. I think people who can have such happiness to themselves ought to be very kind to other people. I know I should try to be. I can imagine myself driving through the country like that; and if there was any trouble, it would be the thought that I could not make all the poor people one might meet just as contented as oneself. One might meet, who knows, some young fellow going away from his sweetheart, *forced by fate*, and very much troubled about his prospects; and a letter of introduction or something might save misery. But these are all idle dreams; and one must take the world as it is.

"I am so glad that that kind old lady has again befriended you; and hope that something *substantial and permanent* may come of her friendship for you; but even if these hopes are disappointed, I am convinced you

did right in going away to London. Genius such as yours is a trust. You had no right to waste your time fishing and boating and shooting. Even if it were to be decided by fate that you and I were never to meet again, do you not think I should watch your career, of which I am far more certain than you are? Of course, I don't say that success is to come all at once. I do believe you are working your best; though I don't think from what you say that that Scotch artist—I thought the Scotch were so practical!—does you any good. I suppose he thinks it would be romantic to live in a *garret;* and if I was a *bare foot lassie* perhaps it would; but now again you will accuse me of mercenariness just because I have to talk common sense. I don't believe there's anybody in the world cares less for money than I do; but I see what money can do, and how it gives people time to be thoughtful and kind to those around them; and in any case I am not going to be the one to wreck such a career as you have before you, Scotchman or no Scotchman.

"I have been so much occupied here that

I forget whether I thanked you for the volume of political speeches that you sent Miss Patience; but at all events I was asked, and intended to do so, with her best compliments. The book seems to be highly appreciated; she has scarcely stirred out since we came here. As for our stay here, that is quite uncertain; but I am in love with the scenery (it is far prettier and not as grand or wild as I expected, and you know I prefer quietness to Alpine terrors), and I shall tear myself away with great regret. We make our way on to Limerick, where I have four concerts—the old mill-wheel again after this Paradise. So, dear Willie, you need not write here if you are writing, but to the post-office, Limerick, and I shall expect a letter saying that you know I am acting in the best kindness, and laying myself open to the charge of being a money-grasping young woman (which is absurd you know, for if I was, where is there any to grasp?) when all I want is to act prudently for you and me. Good-bye, dear Willie, if there's any one wishes you a speedily secure position and

great fame and reputation such as you deserve, there's no one wishes that more heartily than, Your affectionate KITTY.

"*P.S.* — Thursday morning. Dearest Willie, this letter does read so business-like that I am ashamed of it; and yet I can't burn it, and have to go over all the arguments again. It quite wore out my small brain last night; and there were such difficulties too—such interruptions—that it seems all confused. I meant it to be so kind; and it reads like a school-book. Never mind, Willie, you know I am not mercenary; and that no one wishes you to get on more heartily than I do. I meant the letter to be *very kind indeed;* and at least you will be pleased that I am delighted with Killarney. Good-bye. The morning is lovely; and we are just going out for a row."

"Going out for a row?" he repeated mechanically to himself. Who were going out for a row? Miss Patience, according to Kitty's own showing, scarcely stirred out of the hotel at all. And what were they doing

there? How had he heard nothing about it? What did all this mean—about the trouble of the world, and the sacrifice of one's inclinations, and a future for him of which she was to be the distant spectator? He read the letter over again, in a bewildered sort of way. It was not like Kitty—it was not like the wilful, petulant, loving and teasing Kitty at all. It is true that her letters had for some time past been reserved—occasionally hurried and curt; but here was a long rambling letter laying bare all her thoughts, and it did not sound as if it was Kitty who was speaking. And was she laying bare all her thoughts, he asked himself? Was it her great regard for his future fame that caused her to refuse his appeal—an appeal that seemed to him to be so simple and natural and opportune?

Then he eagerly grasped at the notion that perhaps his abrupt proposal had startled her. This was but maiden coyness. She had been alarmed by the definite request that she should come over and be married and occupy these humble apartments until a more

suitable dwelling could be chosen. These rambling arguments of hers were a mere girlish trick of fence. Modesty was sheltering itself behind the guise of prudence. And he could have laughed at Kitty's imploring him to believe that she was not mercenary—as if it were likely he could suspect her of that!

Still there was something very strange and disquieting in the tone of this letter; and when he sat down to answer, he experienced the novel sensation of being afraid. Afraid of Kitty! If he could have caught her by both hands, he would not have been afraid. But that was the mischief of it—the great distance between them. That was why he was afraid—afraid of the misunderstandings that letters cause. He wrote hurriedly; he seemed to have so much to say; and wished to say it all at once; and moreover, he must needs write in good spirits if he would drive away her despondency.

"My darling Kitty—I have received your extraordinary letter. It does not sound

as if you had written it at all. Why are you so serious? What has frightened you? Are you the same Kitty that, when I first came to London, used to write every day nearly, 'Make haste; make haste; for I love you so!'? And now there is not a word of love in this long letter; but a great deal of down-heartedness and fear and political economy and Benjamin Franklin sort of wisdom. And then, my pretty-eyed philosopher, your facts are a little askew. You accuse me of being too poetical; and if to love you is to be romantic and poetical, I will admit the charge. But if you mean that I allow poetry or anything else to interfere with my care for the future you are all wrong. You don't know how rigidly I've saved up every possible penny since I came to London. *I* don't go taking holidays at Killarney; when I have to go for a journey, it's all because of a wicked young woman who won't be reasonable and sensible and come and be married at once. And really and seriously, Kitty, what have you to fear? I have £110 saved; and £200 a year is quite enough to make a start with, in a quiet

way; and if things go better, won't you be rather glad in after life that you and I were together during the poorer time? You talk about my being precarious (your English, Miss Kitty, has not been improved by the Killarney air), but is not everything and everybody more or less so? You are like Miss Patience, thinking that literature is so precarious a profession because a tile might fall on your head from a roof. No doubt this old lady might die; but so might you, or I; and surely, since life is so uncertain, common sense would counsel you to make the best of it while you may. Life is not such a very long thing; youth is still shorter; and surely when two people love each other, and have a little faith in the future, and a reasonable security in the present, even Benjamin Franklin, Poor Richard, Catherine Romayne, and similar philosophers might admit that it would be unwise to throw away a certain happiness on the chance of some good to come. It seems so strange to have to talk to you like this, Kitty, even as a joke. I can scarcely believe this letter of yours to

be serious. Who was it who declared that she could live on nothing; who implored me never to leave her; who asked me to 'live in her heart, and pay no rent'? And all that happened little more than a year ago. What has changed her so in so short a time?

"I know. They say that once in every seven years, on a beautiful summer morning, just at sunrise, the O'Donoghue of the Lakes comes down from his magic home in the mountains, riding a white horse, and accompanied by fairies. He rides across Lough Leane, and wherever he goes on the dry land all his old possessions and splendour appear again; and when he has seen that everything is right he sets out home again. Now no doubt you have heard that, if you have courage enough, you can go with him, and cross Lough Leane dry-shod, and accompany him to his home in the mountains, where, before bidding you good-bye, he will present you with part of his buried treasure. Have I found you out, Miss Kitty? Are you watching for the O'Donoghue of the Lakes? Is that why your small head is stuffed with

'mercenariness'? Are you so anxious to be rich, and drive through the country with a carriage and pair, that you get up every morning at that hotel before sunrise and wander away down to the lake-side and look across and watch for the white horse and its rider? Is that the peculiar charm you have found in Killarney? And of course the want of sleep and the going about so much alone, and the witchery of the whole thing, have dazed you a little, and made you apprehensive, so that I can scarcely believe it is you who are speaking to me.

"My dearest Kitty, you must really throw aside these unreasonable fears—you, who used to be so fearless, too! If you are afraid to take such a decisive step as coming to London by yourself, I will come over and fetch you. I am entitled to a long holiday. Dearest Kitty, how would it do for me to come over and meet you at Limerick, and stay there long enough to be married, and go back over the Killarney route? I am confident I could take you to beautiful places you are not likely to find on the ordinary

tourist route. Write—no, telegraph one word —'Yes'—that can't take up much of your time, and I will come over at once. And then, you see, as one must be practical and business-like in order to please you, getting married in that quiet way would be very inexpensive; you would have no white silk gown to buy, and I should have no lockets to get for the bridesmaids. Now, Kitty, take heart of grace, and telegraph at once. If you telegraph from Killarney, I will go right on to Limerick and wait for you there. Don't think about it; do it; if you sit down and begin to make out all sorts of calculations, as if you were the secretary of a life insurance company, of course you will arrive at no decision at all, but only plunge yourself in gloom. What a trip that will be, if you will only say 'Yes'! If you went by Bandon and Dunmanway, we will come back by Inchigeelah; and of course we shall go down to Inisheen—and perhaps to the stream there, some moonlight night, just to let Don Fierna and the rest of them know that you had not quite forgotten. You have not

quite forgotten, Kitty? I had the date engraved on the ring you gave me; and then I grudged the expense; for it was useless. There are some things that are engraven on the heart; they become a part of you; you can put them away from you only when you put life away; and I do not think that either of us is likely to forget the vow of that night.

"Well, now, Kitty, the inhuman wretch who occupies the quaint small house by the river that I told you of still remains in it; I often take a turn round that way to see if there is not a board up; but no, the wretched limpet still clings to his shell. Never mind; we shall have plenty of time to walk about and pick out a comfortable little place for ourselves; for, you see, I can always use the fine mornings for walking out, and shift on my work to the time of rain. And then, when we give ourselves a whole holiday, Kitty, there is no end to the beautiful, quiet places one can get to from this neighbourhood. I have explored them all; and the whole time I was thinking 'I know Kitty will be charmed

with this place; and I am certain she never could have been here before.' Scarcely anybody knows what beautiful sequestered spots there are in Richmond Park alone. Then, you see, Kitty, by taking those furnished rooms to begin with, you will be able to fall into housekeeping ways by degrees; and we shall take plenty of time to choose a pretty small house, and put things into it just as we want them. You will be surprised at the knowledge I have acquired of the prices of tables and chairs and carpets; and Ross—that is your Scotch friend—has promised, *when the great time comes*, to present you with a tea-service of old black Wedgwood that he picked up somewhere in Surrey, and that is about the only thing of value that he possesses. Just fancy your sitting in state at your own tea-table in your own house! 'Will you have another cup of tea, Mr. Ross?' 'No, thank you, my dear Mrs. Fitzgerald, but if you would sing another of those Irish songs, that is what I would like to have.' Then you go to the piano; of course we must hire a piano the very first thing, for you are not

going to forget your music, Miss Kitty, when you enter upon domestic slavery. And what about 'The Minstrel Boy' for our Scotchman? Or will you make him cry with 'Silent, oh, Moyle!' Or do you think he will care as much for 'The Bells of Shandon' as we do? I think not. He does not know certain associations. He cannot recall the white Sunday mornings; and the quietude of the country walks; and Kitty declaring that she should never have the courage to marry anybody, and that her proper *rôle* in life was to be an old maid.

"Come now, Kitty! You have a tremendous courage when you like. Pull yourself together. If Miss Patience is preaching political economy, tell her to go to the mischief. I am thinking of your eyes when you meet me—*at Limerick.* Will you be shy and coquettish? Or will you be imperious and riding the high horse! I know you can be in any mood you choose; and the mood I would have you choose, is that of the Kitty of the old, beautiful, love-sweetened days, not this timid, fearing, business-like Kitty

whom I don't know a bit. Who wrote 'Just tell them there's a poor girl in Ireland, who is breaking her heart for your sake!' I know whatever troubles you may be thinking of now, everything will look quite bright and hopeful when I get hold of your shoulders and challenge your eyes to do anything but smile. So no more of your despondency, you pretty black-eyed tiny sweetheart; but one word, and the expenditure of one shilling; and then don't bother your head any more about it until you see me at Limerick. Then I will take command of you, and be responsible for you, and we will together make short work of your economical fears.

"This from one who knows you and loves you far too well to believe in your want of courage; and who sends no other message, or kisses, or anything of the kind—for he is bringing them. W. F."

He went out, and walked rapidly to the pillar letter-box, and posted the letter; there seemed so little time to lose. And then he walked back more slowly, wondering if he

had said everything likely to entice Kitty to a decision.

Just as he was entering the courtyard the postman came along with the second morning delivery; and he had two letters for Fitzgerald. Master Willie took them with little interest (for he was still thinking of the phrases he had used in the appeal sent over the sea) and opened them leisurely as he was going up the stair. And yet the first of these read oddly enough.

"DEAR MR. FITZGERALD—I wonder if you could spare me a few minutes to-morrow, Wednesday, evening, before you leave the house. Or, if that is inconvenient, any other evening will do; but to-morrow evening I am sure to be at home. I only want a few minutes' talk with you.

"Yours faithfully,

"MARY CHETWYND."

He could not imagine what Miss Chetwynd could have to say to him; but as nothing further was to be made out of the letter, he put it in his pocket. The next that

he opened was written on the note-paper of a hotel in Venice.

"DEAR FITZ—It is an age since I heard anything of you; and I have seen so few English periodicals that I have no means of telling how you are getting on. Well, I hope; you have enthusiasm; good health; and an insatiable thirst for work; Pactolus will flow your way sooner or later. The beast of a stream doesn't flow my way; quite the reverse; it flies at my approach; hence these tears. The fact is I am temporarily very hard up, and awkwardly situated, as well—I can't explain, but you may guess; and so, to get out of these embarrassments, I have taken a liberty which I know you won't mind, for it can't cause you any inconvenience. I have drawn a bill on you at three months for £150: and if you would have the good-nature to accept it on presentation, you will do me a great service; and of course you will suffer no harm, for it will be taken up long before that. It is merely the use of your signature for a few weeks that I want;

and I shan't forget your friendliness; *on connaît l'ami au besoin.*

"How is the Lady Irmingarde; and how are the little ringlets round her ears? Be a good boy; and marry the young damsel decently and honourably before the *fides pudica* —I do not write *Punica* and mean no such thing—begins to show the strain of time and distance; and then you will settle down into proper domestic ways; and run no risk of getting into scrapes, either at home or abroad. I hope Gifford gives you plenty to do; two guineas are much too little; but I suppose you make it help. Scobell has turned out to be a mean fellow; I always suspected guinea-pigs.

"Yours faithfully,

"HILTON CLARKE."

He went down the steps again and knocked at Ross's door.

"Come in!"

He entered and found the Scotchman smoking an after-breakfast pipe, seated opposite a picture and staring at it, but with neither brushes nor palette in his hand.

"There!" said Fitzgerald, triumphantly handing him the letter. "Didn't I tell you so?"

Ross read the letter through deliberately, and handed it back.

"Well?" said he, "I always thought him a scoundrel. Now I think him an impudent scoundrel. What more?"

"I tell you he is nothing of the kind!" said Fitzgerald, indignantly. "Don't you see from that letter that he does not think he has done me any injury? I told you so. I told you there were people who otherwise might be admirable enough, but who simply wanted that sixth sense about money matters——"

"That sixth sense!" said Ross, angrily. "And did not I tell you not to go and confuse things by calling common honesty a sixth sense? If a scoundrel in the street picks my pocket, I do not think about any sixth sense; I give him into the hands of the nearest policeman."

"But you Scotchmen are too literal, and so exacting. You won't believe in a man having any virtues, unless he has them all.

Now this man was exceedingly good-natured; he was very friendly to me; I am certain he does not think at this minute that he did me any wrong; he simply has no conscientiousness on that one point——"

"It's a want of conscientiousness that has landed many a poor wretch in jail, who had far greater excuses than that idling selfish creature," said John Ross. "Man, I thought he had opened your een. I thought it was the one good turn he had done ye. I thought he had given ye a lesson. And now, I suppose, ye'll go and sign this bill; and you'll believe he'll pay it; and the end will be—ten pounds to one is the bet I will put on it—I'm saying I will bet ten pounds to five shillings—that not one farthing of that money will come out of anybody's pocket but your own, if ye put your name on the back of the paper."

He knocked the ashes out of his pipe, and continued, still more angrily—

"Man, ye do not deserve to have a young lass waiting for ye—away over there in Ireland, waiting for ye—and you to talk

about throwing away your money on a scoundrel like that——"

"But wait a minute, Ross: I'm not going to do anything of the kind. I would not accept a bill, or back it—the fact is, I don't know what the proper phrase is—for any human being. I've seen the results of it over in our district; the Coursing Club showed me that. And indeed," added Fitzgerald, going forward to look at the picture, "I may soon have need of all the money I can get. There is just a—a—possibility of my setting up house, in a small way, by-and-by."

"Ay? Well, that's better news. That's sensible. But don't turn the mill too hard. You were at work early this morning."

"At work?" said Fitzgerald, staring, "I have not been at work at all. I haven't had any breakfast yet, by the way."

"Then what was all that stamping up and down for?—I thought ye were hammering out an epic poem."

"Oh," said Fitzgerald vaguely remembering that he might have paced up and down the room in his eagerness to get

persuasive phrases. "I was only writing a letter."

"It must have been a terrible business," said the other grimly.

"So it is," said Fitzgerald, perhaps a trifle absently, "to convince one who is at a great distance from you, in a letter. It is difficult —and disheartening at times."

Ross glanced at him keenly.

"Things are not going quite right, then?" said he.

"Oh yes," answered Fitzgerald, with a forced cheerfulness. "Oh yes. Quite right. Oh yes, I think everything is going quite right; and by-and-by I hope you will soon have the opportunity for presenting the Wedgwood tea-cups with a pretty speech. Of course, letter-writing is a roundabout kind of way of arranging anything; it is difficult to explain and to persuade; and one is so apt to take wrong impressions from a letter. Especially a girl, you see; who is nervous and anxious, and afraid to trust her own judgment in taking a decided step. Any one can understand that. Then—then—then it is very

hard and difficult to write, you see; for if you are too serious, she may think you are alarmed, and she may prefer the safety of remaining as she is; and again if you are too cheerful in trying to raise her spirits, she may think that the immediate necessity for coming to a decision cannot possibly be near. It is so much better to see the—the person. But this time, Ross—I don't mind telling you—I have made a very definite proposal. I should not wonder if I were to leave London this very week—and come back with a wife."

"Good luck to ye, then. Now I can understand there's no fear o' your letting that fellow have any more o' your money."

"Of course," said Fitzgerald, handing him the other letter, "that may have something to do with it."

Ross glanced over Miss Chetwynd's brief note.

"Whatever the matter is, it is important," said Fitzgerald. "She has never asked me to see her like that before. Perhaps they are tired of the present arrangement. Perhaps they think it costs too much; or they

may want to have some one else. Well, well," said he more cheerfully, "if it is so, let it be so. One can live somehow. I am not going to break my heart about that."

"Are ye coming out for a stroll then?"

"Indeed no. I am going to get some breakfast; and then set to work on another article on the Irish Ballads. It's wonderful with what heart you work when you know the work is going to be paid for."

"It's no a common experience wi' me," said Ross, drily.

Fitzgerald was whistling to himself as he went up the steps again. It was not the possibility of his losing that chief means of livelihood that could daunt him. Now his mind was full of far other concerns; and he was forcing himself to believe the best. When was the white day to come? At Limerick, at Inchigeelah, on the Blackwater, on the Shannon, he and she together would think but little of what had happened or might happen in London. Might they not find a four-leaved shamrock somewhere, in the still summer woods?

He worked away at this essay on the Irish Ballads with great apparent cheerfulness. When he stamped up and down, as was his wont, sometimes he hummed the air of one or other of the old songs he was transcribing. But when he came to "Kathleen O'More"—"My own little Kathleen, my poor little Kathleen, my Kathleen O'More"—he did not get on so quickly. Perhaps there was some chance association—or the bit of likeness between the names; but it seemed difficult to him to copy these lines. And at last the pen was pushed aside, and his head fell forward on his clasped hands.

* * * *

Why was Kitty at Killarney; and why was she so cold, and speaking in a voice that seemed far away and strange, and not close, and tender, and familiar as in the old and happy time? She could not have forgotten Inisheen!

CHAPTER X.

IMAGININGS.

It was without concern or apprehension of any kind that he went up on this evening to Hyde Park Gardens. He cared not what might happen in that direction. He was scarcely thinking of it.

As usual on reaching the house he left his hat and coat in the hall, and carried his bundle of books and newspapers upstairs to the drawing-room; but, to his surprise, found no one there. So he deposited the literature on the table, and went and stood before the fire—an institution retained in this house, for the mere sake of cheerfulness, long after the early summer warmth had set in; and stared into the shifting and flickering lights as if he could find something behind them. There was an absolute silence in the room.

Then a slight noise startled him from his

reverie, and, turning, he found Mary Chetwynd approaching him, with a pleasant smile on her face.

"Good evening, Mr. Fitzgerald," said the tall young lady with the pretty head and the clear eyes.

"Good evening," said he, very respectfully.

"Auntie's compliments, and she is very sorry she can't see you this evening. She has caught a bad cold, and the doctor has ordered her to keep to her room for a couple of days. Won't you sit down?"

As Miss Chetwynd gave him this invitation, she herself passed over to an easy-chair near the fire. What perfect self-possession she had! Everything she did or said seemed to come to her so simply and naturally. When he observed this quiet and serious dignity and grace of manner, he could not but think of Kitty's will-o'-the-wisp flashes of petulance, and affection, and coyness; but it was with no conscious desire to draw any comparison. Kitty was to him the one woman in the world; there was "none like her, none."

"I hope it is nothing serious?" said he.

"Oh, dear, no. Not in the least. In fact, I am wicked enough to look on it as opportune, for now I can speak to you freely for a few minutes, if you will give me so much of your time; and I must tell you that I have a great favour to ask of you, and that I am rather frightened that I may not put my petition before you properly."

She did not look frightened. She spoke pleasantly; and there was a sort of smile in her eyes.

"Perhaps I may be able to spare you some embarrassment, Miss Chetwynd," said he, "if I guess what you want to say——"

"I don't think you could do that, exactly," was the answer.

"Only this," he said, with indifference, "if you have any friend you wish to put into my position here, I hope you won't think twice about saying so——"

"Oh, but that is not it at all," she said, promptly. "Who could fill your position? Who could give dear old auntie that interest in everyday life that seemed to be going

away from her altogether? Indeed, Mr. Fitzgerald, I am very grateful to you—we all are. You have made my aunt quite chatty and talkative again; and what she talks most about is yourself, and your writings, and your friend the Scotch artist. Oh, that would never do."

At another time Fitzgerald would have been glad enough to hear this frank and kindly speech; for he had not guessed that this was the light in which she regarded the situation. But on this evening, somehow, his thoughts were elsewhere; he was indifferent as to what might happen to him with regard to this post of his; there was a weight on his heart—he knew not why.

"You have often heard auntie speak of Boat of Garry?"

"Yes," said Fitzgerald, with a sudden awakening of interest. For now she was three hundred miles and more nearer his thoughts.

"That is what I want to speak to you about, then; and I shall have to make some explanations before I put my request before

you. No doubt you know that auntie, who is generosity itself, made a present of the whole place—just as it stood—horses and carriages and so forth, everything, indeed—to my poor brother."

"Oh yes, I know that," said Fitzgerald, who had heard a good deal about this place on Bantry Bay from one source or another, and had even imbibed the preposterous notion that Miss Chetwynd had wanted to turn him into a bailiff or steward or something of the kind.

"Fortunately my poor brother was pretty well off," she continued, "and so he could keep up the place; though hunting was his favourite amusement, and he always spent the winter in England. But the summer and autumn he usually spent at Boat of Garry; and sometimes auntie and I went over and stayed for a while. Those were very happy days for the dear old lady; for she quite worshipped her boy, as she called him, and she was so proud to see him go about over his own place. Her kindness to him was beyond anything you can imagine.

I don't know whether she has ever told you, but she is dreadfully afraid of the sea——"

"I guessed as much from one or two things she has said," Fitzgerald answered.

"I think she was nearly drowned when a girl, or something like that. However, she detests being on the water. And yet she went and bought a small steam-launch for Frank —for the place is rather out of the way; and she used to control her nerves and go on board that detestable boat—yes, and drag me too—and pretend to be quite delighted when we went roaring and puffing through the beautiful quiet scenery up by Glengariff, or darted about Bearhaven, threatening collisions on every hand. What I thought of these excursions I need not tell you——"

"I don't know much about steam-launches; but I should think ladies would not care much for them."

That was what he said; what he was thinking of was Glengariff. Had Kitty and Miss Patience passed that way? Were the roses out in the hedgerows yet? Had they walked along the shore in the twilight? Had

she tried the piano in the drawing-room later on? Did the people know who she was? Had she sung for them? Why had she not written?

"Then after the—the dreadful accident," said Miss Chetwynd, and for a moment she looked aside somewhat,—"you have heard about that too, I suppose—when poor Frank was taken from us—I thought auntie would never recover. Her interest in life seemed to be completely gone. But what she insisted on was that Boat of Garry should be left exactly as my poor brother had left it. Nothing was to be touched. You see, the property reverted to her; and she could not bear the idea of going there; and still less the idea of selling it; and so she said it should remain exactly as Frank left it. And so it has remained, from that day to this."

She heaved a little sigh.

"That is the sad part of the story. Perhaps you knew most of it. And now I come to the request I have to make of you, Mr. Fitzgerald, and it is a very plain and unsentimental one. I really think it a pity

that a property like that should be allowed to remain absolutely useless; and I am not sure that auntie would not think so also, if some change could be made gradually. I don't actually wish that she should sell the place, for it has been a long time in the possession of her side of the family; besides it has associations for both of us. It is a long time now since my poor brother was killed; and—and, if I may hint as much again—since my aunt made your acquaintance she has been much more like her former self, and less given to that moping she gave way to for a time. Now don't you yourself think it a pity that a place like that over at Bantry should be allowed to exist without being of use to a single soul?"

"It does seem so," said Fitzgerald. "But does no one occupy it?"

"No; that is the absurdity of it—well, why should I call it an absurdity when it was only a testimony to the poor old lady's grief? No one occupies it. We have to pay—at least, my aunt pays—for keeping up the whole establishment; and all that we get

from it is a hamper of game now and again in the autumn, or a salmon. There the whole place is—horses, a coachman, a game-keeper, a yachtsman, and two women-servants; and I suppose the only person who makes any use of the place is Mr. M'Gee, the solicitor in Bantry, for when he goes round to pay the wages, and that, I suppose he has some shooting, or a sail in a steam-launch. I proposed some time ago to my aunt that she should at least bring the horses and carriages to London; but when poor old auntie said nothing at all, but only turned away to hide the tears in her eyes, what further could I urge? You see, they were his horses. He was proud of them. So with the steam-launch. She would not hear of its being sold. In fact, for a long time, any reference to the place was so distressing to her, that I did not even mention it—except when I had to draw out a cheque for Mr. M'Gee, and then it was simply, 'Auntie, dear, Mr. M'Gee wants so much.' You may think all this an absurd piece of sentiment—perhaps it is; but then, you see, I am Frank's

sister; and I know how kind my aunt was to him; and if she has still this feeling about preserving intact what belonged to him, I don't find it altogether ridiculous."

"I hope not," said Fitzgerald, gently. He thought she spoke very prettily about this matter. He should not have thought she had so much sympathy.

"But now," she said, "now that time has gone by, and auntie seems a little more cheerful, I think some effort should be made to get some good out of the place. I don't know that I am very penurious; but I assure you I do grudge to have to draw out cheques to keep up a perfectly useless place like that. Perhaps it is because I see a good deal of want and trouble and misery that my conscience rebels against throwing away money like that."

"Surely you are quite right," said Fitzgerald—though he did not quite know why he should be appealed to. "If Mrs. Chetwynd does not wish to sell the place; and if it would be painful for her to go and live in it, why might she not let it? If the shooting

is fair it ought to let. The neighbourhood is pretty enough."

"That is what I think too," said Mary Chetwynd, with that placid intelligent smile of hers. "But the only person who could induce her to let the place, and so save all this expense, is yourself, Mr. Fitzgerald; and now you know why I have ventured to ask you to do me a great favour."

"I? What could I do about it?" he exclaimed.

"If I were to go now and ask auntie to let Boat of Garry," said Miss Chetwynd, "she would think me very cruel and hard-hearted. The idea of turning in a stranger to succeed to poor Frank's dog-cart, and his gun-room, and the little cabin in the steam-yacht—that would be quite terrible to her. But she might get accustomed to the idea. She would not mind your going over and occupying the place. She has a great regard for you. You are about Frank's age; you know about shooting; it would seem natural enough to her that you should go over and live at Boat of Garry for a time. That once

done, the rest would be easy. There would be no difficulty about persuading her to let it next year to one or other of our friends—some of the scientifics, as she calls them, are very fond of shooting. I know I am asking a great deal," she continued, quickly, for she saw that he looked rather astonished. "You are making your way in literature, and this looks as if you might be taken away from that for a considerable time. But would it be so? I cannot imagine any place better fitted for literary work, unless, indeed, you found it really too solitary; and then you could send across to Bantry, and you may be sure that Mr. M'Gee, who is a sporting character, would be only too glad to join you. Then, again—you see, Mr. Fitzgerald," she said, with a laugh, "I have to begin by persuading you, and if I fail with you, I am done altogether—you would have the kind of holiday that would just suit you, according to all accounts. You would have fishing, shooting, and boating—in a sort of country that you are familiar with. You have been very close at work, I should judge, since you came to

London. You have scarcely ever been out of London."

"But," said he, in rather a bewildered way, "do you mean this? Is it an actual proposal—that I should go to Ireland now?"

"Oh no; not at all," she said, pleasantly. "It is only a project of mine. My prayer to you is that if auntie should suggest your going over to Ireland, and taking your holiday in that way, you won't refuse. I have put the whole situation of affairs before you; and if you cared to take your holiday that way, it would be, as you see, conferring a great obligation on us—and on me especially, for you would be helping me to carry out my plan."

It was a prospect that ought to have been alluring enough to a young man of his habits and occupations. But he could not think of that now. There was something of far greater import to him and his future occupying his thoughts.

"You mean this year?" he says. "Now?"

"I am not sure about 'now,'" she said. "Well, say 'now,' or as soon as I can get

my aunt coaxed to make the suggestion. The salmon-fishing has begun, has it not?"

"I am sorry," said he, rather breathlessly, "but—but I may be called away to Ireland on important affairs within the very next few days—I could not pledge myself with any certainty——"

And then a wild idea occurred to him—an idea that sent the blood rushing to his brain. What if the two excursions could be combined? What if he were to take Kitty to Boat of Garry instead of to Inisheen? Here, indeed, was a project! Poor Kitty, whose imagination had been bothered by vain dreams of driving a carriage and pair!—here was the very carriage and pair provided for her, and the quietest of country residences for the honeymoon, and a yacht at her disposal, and servants and all awaiting her! Could anything be more opportune? Was there ever such a coincidence in human history? Of course he knew that great people frequently lent their country seat to a bridegroom and bride as a safe and pleasant retreat during the honeymoon; but that he

and Kitty should be suddenly and unexpectedly provided with this paradise down by the sea—that, surely, was a thing that never could have entered her brain, even when she was dreaming of the bliss of having a carriage and pair, and being rich, and driving through pretty scenery. Moreover, would it not be a great inducement for her to fix a definite time? Could she withstand the pictures he would draw of this happy and secret retirement there?

"But," said he, quickly, "did you mean that it was necessary that I should go to Boat of Garry alone?"

"Alone? Not at all," said she. "I spoke of your being there alone in case you might want to continue your literary work. Of course, I don't think I could induce auntie to let you take with you, although you are a great favourite of hers, a big party of strangers——"

"Oh, I don't mean that at all," said Fitzgerald, hastily; his brain was painting pictures with such vivid colours as John Ross never squeezed out of any tin tube.

"It would be a great favour to me," continued Miss Chetwynd, seeing that he was now considering her scheme, "and it would be a pleasant holiday for you, and it would be doing a service to poor old auntie. She would see that very soon. The present state of affairs could not possibly continue; and I am sure, once the gradual change was made she would be the first to acknowledge that it was right. To tell you the truth, Mr. Fitzgerald, I was once a little afraid of that fixed idea of hers. I did not like it, especially when she was alone, her melancholy seemed to get so morbid and hopeless. But now that she has come back to the old interest in everyday affairs, surely now is the time to get her to give up this too sensitive repugnance of hers to having Boat of Garry touched in any way; and I don't see any one else who can do it so easily as you. I do not know whether it has occurred to you," she continued—and for the first time she showed a little embarrassment—"but I think my aunt wishes to put you, as far as is now possible, in Frank's place—I mean in her little

world of friendships and interests; and sometimes I am quite startled, when I come into the room accidentally, to hear her chatting to you in exactly the same tone she used to use to him. She thinks you are exactly his height; but you are an inch and a half taller —two inches, perhaps. And dear old auntie forgets a little; and now she thinks that poor Frank was just as fond of books and writing and poetry and all that as you are, whereas there was nothing Frank hated so much as a book, except "British Rural Sports," and Colonel Hawker's volume, and the *Field*, on Sunday morning. You won't find much of a library at Boat of Garry, if you go there. Do you think it is hard of me to speak of my dead brother like that? Sometimes I think I have less than my share of natural affection, when I find I can't quite believe all that poor old auntie believes about him. And yet I was very fond of him. The world seemed quite changed for me when he died; there seemed to be no one with whom I ever could be so intimate; and who did me so much good in talking plain common sense

when I was inclined to attempt impossible things. And yet when I find how common such sorrows are, I sometimes think that I grieve too much; and that I should try not to think about him at all; but to go on with my work, such as it is, and let everything be for the best. Only the world seemed to get so empty when he was taken away from us. I cared more for his approval than for anybody's, although he was not clever. I could not bear his laughing at me. I used to go out with him when he went shooting, though the cry of a hare when it was struck cut my heart like a knife. The smallest present he made me was of more value than anything anybody else could give me. He used to call me his 'little girl,' though I was very nearly as tall as he was. And—and although I am not very sentimental—still, to tell you the truth, Mr. Fitzgerald, I should not like the idea—not just yet—of your taking a big party of strangers to—to—Frank's house."

"Oh, of course not," said he, instantly. "I did not dream of such a thing."

She was a little tremulous about the lips —only for a second.

"If any one went with me," said he, thinking it better she should know the truth, "it would be my wife."

"But you are not married, Mr. Fitzgerald?" she exclaimed, with wonder in her eyes.

"No——"

"But you are going to be?" she said, with a quick interest.

Then her eyes dropped.

"I beg your pardon. I really beg your pardon," she said, as she rose. "I have taken up so much of your time. You ought to have stopped my chatter. Well, may I assume that you are my accomplice?"

"Miss Chetwynd," said he, with a smile, "I have a suspicion that your ways are very like your aunt's ways, and that you contrive kindnesses under the guise of begging for a favour."

"On the contrary," she said, as she gave him her hand, "my motives are distinctly mercenary. I don't want that money to be

thrown away from year to year for nothing; and I ask for your help. At the same time I am not saying that you might not have a pleasant holiday there. Good-night, and thank you so much."

Even in his eager haste to get outside and consider all the bearings of this new proposal that he would lay before Kitty, he could not but carry away with him a pleasant impression from this little interview. Mary Chetwynd had been so gentle, so kind, and serious, and true in manner, so good an example (as he thought) of an accomplished, and amiable, and frank young English gentlewoman that he had a little remorse about it all. Perhaps he had misunderstood her somewhat. It did not appear that her heart had been altogether hardened by scornful knowledge: what if there were no such deadly antagonism, after all, between sentiment and science? How nicely she had spoken of old Mrs. Chetwynd: what true affection breathed in her little simple sentences about her brother! Even that bit of embarrassment seemed so womanly; she had instantly

withdrawn her questions for fear of giving offence. And if she were to prove the means of putting this great happiness within the reach of Kitty and himself would he not seek some opportunity in the future to show that he was not altogether insensible of her kindness?

But the immediate thing was to let Kitty know. He was so anxious to put any additional inducement before her; and certainly this one—as his quick imagination pictured it—was of sufficient value. But would it appeal in like measure to Kitty? Would she be able to see all those fascinating glimpses of their life together in the house by the sea that now crowded in on his mind? What a pity it was he had not been able to add this temptation to his letter of that morning! No matter; by the time she reached Limerick both letters would probably be awaiting her at the post-office.

Then in his impatience he walked to a telegraph-office, and sent off this message to her: "If you are remaining at Killarney, ask letters to be forwarded from Limerick. Do

not answer first letter till you get second. Telegraph if this reached."

This second letter was the one that he was now hurrying home to write. And these were bright coloured pictures that he saw before him in the gray dusk of the evening—as he went rapidly along the London streets. He somewhat forced himself to think of them. There was something else he would not think of—that he put away. This was the immediate question: whether Kitty also would not be fascinated by these new possibilities? Had she already had a passing glance at the beauties of Glengariff? —then she would know the sort of country through which she could have her daily drives in that coveted carriage and pair. Would she come part of the way up the hill in the evening to meet him on his return from the shooting? Would she take a book with her and sit on the river bank, among the warm grass and the meadow-sweet, while with a big sweep of the rod he dropped the great salmon fly into the deep and distant pool? And then he knew that Kitty would jump

up with a shriek of delight when the struggle began; and she would watch with wide eyes the rushes and the sharp and dangerous leaps of the big fish; and by-and-by, when victory was becoming sure, would she stand by his side with the gaff ready to his hand? For one thing, Kitty was not the best of sailors. But then you could so quickly run back again in a steam-launch if there was anything like a sea on outside; and no doubt still days would occur on which she might—all by herself, as it were—imagine Kitty in sole command of a steamer—sail all the way around by Dursey Head into Kenmare River, while he shot across the Slieve Miskish heights, if the Boat of Garry shootings extended so far. And then to think of his being away up there in the wilderness of rock and heather; and far below him the little toy steamer; and the tiniest figure sitting in the stern, reading. Can the dog-whistle reach as far? Or the view halloo of the keeper to the engine man? Or is it Kitty herself who first catches sight of them; and starts up, and waves a handkerchief? It is almost a race down the hill

at last; and then the little boat is sent ashore; and they are pulled out to the small steamer; and the birds and the big brown hares are all laid out on deck. And then away to sea again in the golden evening; with the long headlands growing warmer in colour as the sun sinks; and the Atlantic murmuring all along the solitary coasts. Would there be a piano at Boat of Garry? Or would their evenings be spent out of doors, mostly, until the stars began to be visible over the trees? Kitty was fond of the darkness and of silence; they would hear the curlews calling along the shore as they went home through the meadows.

It was of Kitty at Boat of Garry, not of Kitty at Killarney, that he forced himself to think. Also he persuaded himself that this way of spending the honeymoon would be a very inexpensive one. Kitty must admit that. There would be no hotel bills; no costs by road or rail. Kitty was almost in the neighbourhood; the travelling would be nothing. Would it be asking too much that the carriage should meet them at Kenmare,

to take them up and over the gaunt mountain road until they descended into the leafy woods of Glengariff? No doubt the horses would be the better for some good stiff work now; it was far from probable that the coachman had taken them out for regular exercise, in a place where there was no master.

These points and many more were put before Kitty in this second letter. It was a very matter-of-fact letter. It assumed that Kitty would be as delighted as himself with this opportune proposal. Why should he implore and beseech?—would not his faithful Kitty rejoice as he rejoiced, to see their dearest hopes within easy reach of fulfilment? And it behoved him to be very business-like now. Kitty need not be afraid of the cost of the wedding; the simpler the better. And if he disingenuously omitted to mention all the minute points of the case—if, without being guilty of any misstatement whatsoever, he still left it possible for Kitty to imagine that this proposal that they should occupy Boat of Garry had been made by the Chetwynds with especial reference to her

marriage-trip—what harm was there in Kitty innocently believing that these two ladies wished to be kind to her?

So he went and posted that letter too. All that he could do he had done. Then he walked back to the courtyard; found John Ross at home; and the rest of the evening was spent in the Scotchman's studio.

For Fitzgerald had grown half-afraid of sitting by himself in the solitary room upstairs. Sometimes strange imaginings would flash across his brain—fears that took his breath away—that were hateful and horrible—that were as unworthy of himself as they were cruel to the true-hearted and tender-eyed Kitty, who was so far away, with no one to speak for her innocence and honour and faith, if he should dare to doubt.

CHAPTER XI.

THE REVELATION.

The days passed; no message of any kind, no letter, no telegram, came to these poor lodgings in the Fulham Road. No work was possible for him. He kept pacing up and down the room, listening for the postman; or idly wandering through the streets of Chelsea, always certain that her reply would be awaiting him there on his return. If he thought of anything it was of how he and she together would occupy the mornings, and days, and long summer evenings at Boat of Garry. His eyes were turned to the south. He seemed to keep his face averted from Killarney. Limerick was a blank to him.

He tried to avoid John Ross; but Ross was not to be avoided. He came upstairs; regarded Fitzgerald for a second; looked suspiciously round—as was his wont, indeed,

for his eyes seemed to take in everything; and forthwith drove his neighbour down into the studio, where Fitzgerald found that a sumptuous supper (according to their notions down that way) had been prepared, for two.

"I have watched ye, my man," said Ross, "once or twice of late. Ye are at it again."

"At what?"

"Starving yourself."

"Indeed I am not. Why should I starve myself when I have four pounds a week, with chances of more?"

Ross muttered something to himself, as he brought one or two further articles to the supper-table. Then he fetched a bottle of beer for his companion; and they both sat down. Fitzgerald began to talk about a railway accident that had happened the previous day; but Ross had other thoughts in his mind.

"Ye are not starving yourself, then?" said he, glancing at his neighbour.

"Not in the least."

"Ye are not looking well, then. Ye keep too much indoors; and too much in town.

Ye'll forget what the country is like if ye go on like this; and fine leeterature you'll turn out then!—leeterature with a white face and bloodless hands. What the mischief do ye mean?" he exclaimed, suddenly. "No meat?"

Fitzgerald had pushed his plate away, and was merely playing with a bit of crust.

"I had something," he said, evasively.

"When?"

"Oh, not very long ago."

"When?" said the other.

"Well, about the middle of the day."

"And so ye have got yourself into the habit of eating nothing after two o'clock?"

He himself was busy enough. For a time Fitzgerald had all the talking. What he talked about was merely the current news of the papers.

"There's an article I would like to see ye write; ye might do some good wi't," said Ross at length.

"What do you charge for supplying subjects to poor authors?"

"Oh, but it's no for fine leeterary treat-

ment, this. It's a sledge-hammer ye want, to smash down a piece of meeserable hypocrisy. I want ye to denounce the perneecious sympathy that ye find expressed in books—and mostly in weemen's books, I may say—for the genteel folk who are 'Keeping up appearances,' and for the trouble they suffer in consequence. Lord save us, these are the people we are to sympathise wi'—people whose vanity makes them live at eight hundred pounds a year when they have only five hundred pounds; and it's a 'proper pride;' and they're doing the best for the family. A proper pride!—it's a proper pride that must suffer some stings, I should think, when the unpaid tradesmen come ringing at the door. And then the way they are described as peetying themselves, and sighing with resignation over their struggles, just as if God had decreed them to have hired broughams, and dinner-parties, and their daughters at boarding-schools, and what not; and as if their no being able to settle their bills was something they could not make out! No; it is their right to live in such a

way; it never occurs to them that if they have five hundred pounds a year, they'd better live on that, or less; they have to keep up appearances, and you and me are expected to have a great peety for all they suffer through their perneecious vanity and pretence. If they choose to live beyond their income, let them smart for it!—why should I peety them? I peety the butchers and greengrocers that they plunder; or, worse still, that they leave so long unpaid that the poor man, for want of ready money, is forced to take to over-charging and trade dodges, and in a measure becomes a thief. Now I am told," said he, fixing his keen eyes on Fitzgerald for a second, "that you Irish are rayther given to that keeping up of appearances—that is to say, living at a rate ye cannot properly afford."

Fitzgerald suspected as much. These homilies of Ross's generally ended with a personal application.

"Some of the small squireens are pretty much given that way," he said, "but I suppose you'll find about an equal amount of

pretentiousness everywhere among the poor genteel. It isn't easy for them to give up the way of living they have been used to."

"But it's the beginning, my lad!" said the other. "It's the beginning to live beyond your means that's the mischief. Now, you, for example; how are you going to begin?"

"I told you. In two small rooms, I hope, at perhaps eight or ten shillings a week. Then we shall look about for a house."

"What size?"

"Small. But I know what you are thinking of, Ross; and there's no use beating about the bush. You are thinking that I am starving myself, being too keen in saving up money; and that this probably means that I shall start housekeeping in too expensive a way. I think that is about what you are afraid of."

"It is," said the other, promptly. "You have just hit it. I cannot understand the use of such violent means. I take it that when two young people get married they

should accommodate themselves reasonably and fairly to their income—not starving yourself, laddie!—and when circumstances improve let their expenditure grow. But if ye begin at the beginning with a vain pretence of genteelity, and get into trouble, do ye expect I am going to peety ye? Not one jot."

"No, what you would do would be to lend us money," said Fitzgerald, who knew the ways of this person. "But there's no starvation in the case—not the least."

"Then what is the matter with ye? Where got ye that grayness in the face?" said his friend, whose eyes missed nothing.

"I have been working hard," said the other, evasively, "and been anxious a little about one or two things."

"I wish ye could bring that young lass over here and marry her straight off," said Ross, bluntly.

"That may not be so far away," was Fitzgerald's answer; and his friend—though he waited for a second, regarding him, as if he expected him to say more—accepted

Fitzgerald's silence, and forbore to press him with any question.

Next morning there was again neither letter nor telegram. This suspense was more than he could bear. He hastily went to the telegraph-office, and sent messages both to Killarney and Limerick, asking whether she had not received his communications; more than that, he telegraphed to the post-master at Limerick, asking to be informed whether letters addressed to Miss Romayne had been sent or called for.

The day passed somehow; there was no answer. And now he made sure she could be neither at Killarney nor at Limerick; and a thousand conjectures filled his anxious mind as to what might have happened. He went back over her letters. There she had used the phrase "make our way" to Limerick; and it occurred to him that, instead of coming back by rail to Mallow and so getting north, it was just possible she and Miss Patience might have tried to get round by Tralee and Listowel, taking the stage-coaches. And although they were both pretty experi-

enced travellers, who could tell what slight misadventure might not have detained them somewhere in these western wilds? It was the only possible explanation of Kitty's silence. And again he convinced himself that there could not have been any serious accident; or that would have found its way to the papers. That truant Kitty, to go and lose herself among these Kerry mountains!

Then, when he was least expecting it, there came to him a letter—or brief note, rather.

"Killarney, Thursday morning.

"DEAR WILLIE—You drive me to say that you are very inconsiderate in worrying me with these constant letters and telegrams. I meet with so much consideration and kindness on every hand that it is all the more surprising to find you so exacting and impatient. That would not seem a pleasing prospect to any one. I have not sent for your letters to the Limerick post-office; because there would not be time; we leave here to-morrow; and do not go to Limerick, the engagement being cancelled. But I dare-

say I know what is in them ; and I am rather tired of arguing. Besides, you do not seem to think of anything but your own wishes. How could I turn adrift Miss Patience, who has no means of livelihood whatever? She has been most faithful and good and kind to me ; and, of course, I could not send her away without making some provision for her. I am sure I wish to please every one—especially those who have been *very kind* to me ; but it is sometimes so distracting to try to please everybody that sometimes I don't know what I may not do. But please be a little forbearing with me ; you are so impetuous. Your affectionate KITTY."

He stared at the letter in dumb amazement. Was it really Kitty who had written that? Was it the Kitty with whom he had walked arm-in-arm through the hawthorn lanes on the Sunday mornings—who could find no speech soft enough, no caressings endearing enough, no words of love true, and close, and near enough, for him—who was now reproaching him with his want of con-

sideration and taunting him with the suggestion that others were kinder than he? Was it possible for a woman's heart to change so? He would not look at the intermediate time; he would not think of the gathering coldness of the last six or eight months' letters; it was the Kitty of Inisheen that he was thinking of—it was the Kitty who had stretched her warm, trembling little hand to him, across the stream down in the darkness, and repeated the pledge that gave each to the other, and looked up and kissed him when the lovers' vows were over. Was this the same Kitty?

But she could not have changed so. He would not believe it. Kitty had been put out of temper by something; and at such times she wrote hurriedly, a little incoherently, sometimes heedless of her grammar even. What he would do would be to take the matter in his own hands. He would go and get hold of Kitty herself—that was the first thing. Once he had a grip of her small, warm fingers, he should feel safe. Poor lass, she had become petulant through being left so much alone. He would press back the

hair from her forehead, and smile away the evil spirit from her eyes.

But it suddenly struck him that she had not said where she was going. Was he to lose all clue to her whereabouts, then? Was she to remain for an indefinite time in this petulant mood? Then a strange sort of fear —that seemed to go through his heart like a red-hot wire—stabbed him, as it were; and in a blind and bewildered way he went down the stairs, and went in to Ross's studio.

"Ross," said he—and Ross certainly stared at him, for his manner was unusual, "I wouldn't show you a love-letter; but this isn't much of a love-letter. I wish you would look at it and tell me what you think."

He seemed rather breathless.

"Have you had any quarrel?" said John Ross, when he had read the letter slowly and carefully.

"Quarrel? Not a shadow of a quarrel!" he said, eagerly.

"Will I tell ye what I think?" said his friend, watching his expression closely.

"Why not? Why not? That's what I want."

"I think that young lass is going to marry another man."

Fitzgerald reached out his hand, and took back the letter.

"You are quite wrong," he said, quietly, but with his face very gray and haggard. "You are quite mistaken about that. You don't know my—my darling."

He went away without another word; and Ross knew enough not to follow him.

His faithfulness fought on to the end. He would not believe it. It was not in human nature. The heart of a woman could not be so treacherous. It was not possible for the Kitty whom he had clasped to his breast on the shore there at Inisheen—when her face was wet with tears in the moonlight—it was not possible for that Kitty to be gaily smiling a love-smile into other eyes. He had heard her heart beat.

There came a letter:

"Dublin, Tuesday.

"DEAR MR. FITZGERALD—In the hurry of packing, I have been commissioned to acquaint you with a piece of news, which I

fear will cause you some pain, though probably but little surprise. Miss Romayne is to be married to Mr. Cobbs to-morrow morning; and I believe they go to the Isle of Man afterwards, where Mr. Cobbs has some friends. For my part, I must say I am heartily glad of it; for, although Miss Romayne has always been kind to me, and remains so, her successive flirtations have only caused me embarrassment; and I have often been suspected of influencing her to favour this one or reject the other, when in truth I took no interest at all in such trivial matters. What I cannot help regretting is the £40 that will have to be paid to the Limerick people for her cancelling the engagement; but Mr. Cobbs has plenty of money, and probably they regard that as a small matter now. I have some things to send back to you; but cannot get a proper box before the morning. It shall be registered.

"Yours sincerely, E. PATIENCE."

There was one word added to this letter—in another and trembling handwriting. It was in a corner. It was the word "*Forgive.*"

The drowning man, we have often been

told, sees all the chief events of his life pass before him—a procession of clear and startling pictures—in time limited to seconds. This man saw wild and sudden visions too—as he bent forward his brow on his clasped hands—but these rapid, bewildering, heart-breaking scenes had always for their central figure a woman. All the rest of his life was forgotten. The beautiful pictures!—filled with the colour and sunlight of young love and hope; and ever in the midst of them—whether by sea or shore, in rocky glen or on the breezy hillside—some one laughing with parted lips and smiling with glad eyes. But then this other vision that would intrude: it was like the dreadful thing that Heine saw: "That was a merry bridal-feast—joyfully the guests sat at the table—but when I regarded the bridal pair—*Ah, God, my darling was the bride!*"

Was the blow unexpected, then? No. For days and weeks he had been living under the shadow of this nameless fear. It had been like a black cloud over him; he would not look at it; he tried to escape from

it ; he tried to argue it out of existence. He would not confess to a doubt of Kitty's honour and faith ; had she not kissed him, by the side of the stream, where they had plighted their troth together ?

And now he had nothing to say about perjured lips, or woman's deceit, or anything of the kind. The wound had struck deeper than that. It had struck at the very foundations of his faith in human nature. Rather vaguely and thoughtfully—for these pictures of Inisheen were still before his eyes—he got his hat and stick, and went out into the mild summer air. The day was fine ; the people seemed busy. He only knew that life was over for him ; that the world had nothing left for him—except, it might be, a few memories ; he was without interest, or care, or hope—though the lad had scarcely touched his four-and-twentieth year.

END OF VOL. II.